Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

PEACE AIMS SWINDLE

DECEMBER 1939 SIXPENCE

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LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

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10,000

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Awakening Against the War—France—Germany and Czechoslovakia—Stirrings in the British Labour Movement—Economics of War—Towards Fascism—War Prospects—Beginnings of Disillusionment—"Peace Aims" Offensive—Liberal-Labour Imperialism—Fairy Wish-Fulfilment—Bellicose Aims—The Real War Aims of Imperialism—"Federal Union"—Dominating Germany—Colonial Empires—Dreams of Stabilising Western Imperialism—Reactionary Utopias—The War Aim of the Working Class

WITHIN three months of the outbreak of war it can be said that the beginnings of the movement of the people against the war are already showing themselves in all the warring countries. This is a great advance on 1914. That the struggle should flare up first among the enslaved colonial peoples, who constitute five sixths of the population of the "Democratic" Powers, was to be expected. The political one-day strike against the war by ninety thousand Bombay workers on October 2, directly led and organised by the Indian Communist Party, was a portent which places the Indian working class and the Indian Communist Party in the front ranks of the international working-class movement. Similarly on the side of the other brigand Power it is among the subject nationalities, the Czechs, Austrians and others that the first signs of active struggle have developed ; and the *Times* has had to report that the cries of "Long Live Stalin" have sounded in the streets of Prague. But also in the imperialist countries, among the German, British and French peoples the signs of disillusionment with the war, of discontent and gathering struggle are visible. Revolutionary internationalism is stronger from the outset of this war than in the war of 1914. This is the most important difference of the present war from the war of 1914. It is stronger, not only by the existence of the Soviet Union, the first tenth of mankind to reach to socialism, whose example, initiative and practical aid draws forward all the peoples of the world,

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while the power of their socialist State throws the plans of the imperialists into confusion. It is stronger also by the existence of Communist Parties in all countries and by the more advanced stage of the working-class movement. The imperialists are weaker ; they are more torn and confused in their contradictory purposes ; the economic disintegration of their system has gone further ; the political discredit of the Governments of big capital is marked from the outset. These conditions govern the character and the aims of our struggle in the present war. In fighting to end this war, we have no illusory and reactionary aims of rebuilding a peaceful stabilised imperialism or chasing the will o' the wisp of a just and democratic peace within imperialism. The working class, in the words of Dimitrov, " is called upon to put an end to the war after its own fashion, in its own interests, in the interests of the whole of labouring mankind, and thereby to destroy once and for all the fundamental causes giving rise to imperialist wars."

IN France the strength and tenacity of the struggle of the working class and of the Communist Party, despite the most ferocious attempts at suppression and persecution, destruction of democratic rights, imprisonment of elected representatives and disbanding of elected councils, breaking up of trade union organisations, and concentration camps of tens of thousands, is borne witness to by every speech of every Government Minister. Typical was the speech of the Minister of the Interior, Sarraut, on November 6, in which he devoted his main attention to " the enemy at home," the revolutionary working class :

> The internal offensive has already been launched, and it is being carried on with daily increasing intensity . . . .
>
> We shall clear out Communism and its filthy exhalations from our towns, our villages, our municipalities and our social groups. The Government will continue the purge without mercy. They are devoting all their vigilance to this task, and will continue it until France is swept clean of the campaign of defeatism.

Here is the familiar language of the " Anti-Comintern " from its new centre in Paris, with the men of Munich as its leaders. " The Government are devoting all their vigilance to

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this task." To what task ? To the fight against Hitler-Fascism ? Not at all. To the fight against the French working class. All is quiet still on the Western Front. The main pre-occupation of the French Government is publicly declared to be the fight against the French working class, against Communism. And let it be remembered that the French Government is no independent agent, but acts under the thumb of the British Ambassador and British high finance inseparably interlocked with French high finance.

IN Germany the spirit of the working-class fight is expressed in the illegal leaflet of the Siemens factory workers :

> We are fighting for peace. And there can be no peace while Hitler is still in power, and the power of the real masters of Germany, the Krupps, Thyssens, Siemens and Klockners is not completely smashed. This time we want to pluck out the evil by its roots, and build a new Germany where an end is made to exploitation and the drive for profits which always leads to new wars.

This leaflet was signed by the "Trade Unionist, Social Democrat and Communist workers of the Siemens Armaments Factory in Berlin." In Czechoslovakia the Manifesto of the Communist Party has proclaimed the aim :

> From this war there must emerge as victors not those who have called it forth : neither Hitler, nor Chamberlain, neither Daladier, nor Mussolini, nor Beck.
>
> The victors must be those who, against the will of these people, will end the war ; and they will be the international working class, the freedom-loving nations, headed by the unvanquishable Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

In these declarations are proclaimed the aims of the class-conscious workers in all countries in this war.

IN Britain there is no doubt of the swing of opinion developing in the working-class movement on the question of the war. Within the first few weeks scores of labour and trade union organisations have passed resolutions condemning the war as an imperialist war, opposing the political truce and the collaboration of the Labour and trade union leadership with the Government, and demanding the speedy termination of the war. Between October 7 and November 29 such sentiments have been expressed by 70 labour parties, 15 trades

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councils, 7 trade union national and district organisations, 67 trade union branches and 24 co-operative organisations. This beginning is a symptom of the gathering tide of feeling in the militant working-class movement. In all the main industries the workers, driven by the new burdens of war-time conditions and rising prices, are pressing forward their demands ; the tactics of the Government and of the national trade union leadership to disorganise and split the ranks of the workers by small sectional concessions are not succeeding to check the movement or restore stability. The nine-to-one vote of the South Wales coalfield for rejecting the meagre national award of eightpence a day was a sign of the militant feeling that exists. No less significant is the call of the Glasgow Trades Council for a conference of working-class organisations for ending the war. Innumerable small strikes have developed in many localities, and have not been held back by the attempts to whip up war sentiment or by the spurious " anti-fascist " appeals of the big financial backers of fascism and their Munichite supporters in the labour movement. The conditions are gathering for a general movement of working-class advance in defiance of the industrial truce and the political truce. This movement can only be led by the rising militant forces of leadership within the working-class movement, politically represented by the Communist Party.

THE war has strengthened the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital in all the warring countries, both economically and politically ; but at the same time it has laid bare the widening cracks and unstable basis of their whole system and rule. With merciless realism the ruling groups of each country expose the yawning fissures and approaching crash of their neighbour's structure. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer paints a picture of the developing collapse of German currency through inflation :

> Even before the war the official rate of the German mark really meant nothing at all. There were over 50 different kinds of mark, each showing a different degree of depreciation ; and anyone who possessed a frozen balance in marks was fortunate if he could realise it at a twentieth part of its original value. At present the German mark has no position as an international

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> currency, and it is likely to lose rapidly its value as an internal currency. The inflationary tendency which has been latent for several years is bound to develop further under war conditions. (Sir John Simon, House of Commons, September 27, 1939.)

But although German economy is further down the slope, it is only necessary to survey recent issues of the British financial press to see the growing alarm at the prospect of inflation and the consequent increasing demand for the reduction of mass consumption and of the standards of the people. For in fact Britain and France have entered on the economic, financial and political paths which lead in their full development to fascism.

THE whole structure of all-powerful and all-embracing State controls, officered by the leaders of the big trust combines, who in fact " control " themselves and " organise " industry for their own benefit and enhanced profit at the expense of the small and middle businesses, no less than of the consumers and workers, copies the economic structure of fascism. Similar also is the elaborate parallel system of smokescreen joint committees with tame labour representatives, leading up to a " Council of Industry," on the basis of an industrial truce or prohibition (not yet legally enforced, but this may still be attempted) of strikes and " control of employment " of every worker. The political counterpart of this is the system of Emergency Powers, whose regulations already embody all that is required for a police dictatorship, while elections, national or local are suspended, with the exception of by-elections as the sole remaining vent, and the political truce of the three official parties is intended to prevent contests in these and constitute a kind of first form of a single totalitarian governmental bloc. In France this process has gone still further and, with the suppression of the Communist Party, the majority party of the working class, and the savage attack on working-class and democratic rights, it would be no more possible to call present-day France a democracy than Finland or the former Polish State.

THIS is only the beginning of the war process. There could be no greater mistake than to imagine that, because

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the military development in the existing relation of forces has so far been restricted, this is a kind of "half-war." The depth of the contradictions and of the crisis of capitalism which is expressed in the war is far greater than in 1914, and will, if it is not checked, reach to far more destructive results for the life of the people. The ponderous process of the eight years incubation of this war is reflected in the initial stages of its deepening descent. The war is hardening and deepening; the successive peace proposals have been rejected by British and French imperialism, whose aggressive aims to reduce German imperialism to second rank, to establish their reactionary domination in Europe and to prepare the final assault on the Soviet Union stand out ever more clearly. The opposing forces strive to win allies and to widen the area of the conflict. The Low Countries, the Northern countries, the Balkans and South Eastern Europe, and the Far East are all drawn closer to the vortex of the imperialist war. The weapons employed are the weapons of a far more developed and intensively organised monopoly capitalism. Already the mutual blockades are imposing burdens and hardships on the populations at war, and also in the smaller neutral States, within a few months such as were only reached after years in the previous war. The further development means not only a development of military war, but of destruction and privation for all the masses of the people, of food shortage and famine, and of economic chaos.

IT is these war conditions, the impact of the blows of monopoly capital and of the war on the lives of the people, that is leading to the beginnings of awakening and disillusionment and first strivings towards resistance on the part of millions, not only of the class-conscious workers but of the unorganised masses and of the small middle-class elements who are most heavily hit by the burdens of the war and the tightening grip of big capital, not only of the politically awakened few, but of millions not previously concerned with politics. This is the process that developed slowly with the last war, and that begins already more rapidly with the present war. There is not yet active or consciously directed

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discontent, still less, political clearness, save among a tiny minority so far. But there is already lack of enthusiasm for the war, widespread distrust of the Government and of the big business controllers (which the official press seeks to canalise and render harmless by diverting the anger against " Mr. Muddler " and " bureaucratic methods "), and resentment at the increasing hardships imposed alongside glaring class differences and wholesale profiteering. The present situation has been described by an observer in the following terms :

> There is no enthusiasm. With the war as it is, the mood is one of nervous uncertainty, of growing apprehension, of resentment at increasing hardships, but of acceptance of it all because no one can see what to do . . . . The shortages which exist, coupled with the ever-increasing pressure of longer hours and speeding-up, begin to tell on the nation's nerves. Outward expressions of discontent are few.

Anyone would recognise this description of the present phase and type of mood as widely familiar. To prevent misconception, it is worth adding that this is a description by a British official newspaper of the situation and mood of the German people (*Daily Herald*, November 23, 1939).

IT is in this situation when the Government, the war and the official war aims (or rather, denial and concealment of war aims) are beginning to become discredited, and the first signs of awakening and disillusionment are showing themselves, that the Government bloc's " left wing," represented by the Liberal-Labour leadership, steps forward to whip up the enthusiasm with a new " Peace Aims " offensive. In rapid succession a series of statements appeared during the early part of November. While the Government, represented by Lord Halifax's broadcast on war aims on November 7, remained in the remoter mists of cloudy phrases about a " new world " (" we have no idea what the shape of the post-war world will be "), and while a special *Times* article on the same subject on November 3, though more concrete, was also cautious, the Liberal-Labour leadership trumpeted forth an elaborate set of terms to be established at the end of the war for the reconstruction of the world. On November 2

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appeared Sir Walter Layton's " Allied War Aims," through the *News Chronicle*, and re-published as a pamphlet. Next day appeared G. D. H. Cole's " War Aims," published through the *New Statesman and Nation*. On November 8 " Labour's Peace Aims " were officially proclaimed by Attlee as Leader of the Labour Party, and also published as a pamphlet. Along similar lines others in the Labour Party, the *Tribune*, Cripps, " Vigilans," Brailsford, etc., have also ranged themselves. The rôle of the " liberal " supporters of an imperialist war is being reproduced from the last war.

THE normal function of this " Peace Aims " propaganda of the liberal-labour apologists of imperialism is sufficiently familiar. It corresponds to the general function of liberalism—to endeavour to conceal class contradictions and reconcile people to capitalist domination. When capitalism lets loose one of its murderous wars for profits, this function always becomes difficult. The contradictions of imperialism, which have nothing to do with any ideal motives, but a great deal to do with markets, colonies and spheres of exploitation, break out at a certain point into a war. The driving forces of the war are the most reactionary chauvinist predatory sections of finance-capital, represented and led in the present case by the Chamberlains, Churchills, Hoares, Rothermeres, etc. Everyone knows what these represent ; it does not require a great deal of political experience and discernment to see what they are after. But to recognise the plain facts of an imperialist war would be death to liberalism. It would leave no alternative save directly to oppose and fight it, which is in fact a revolutionary task. The only solution for liberalism is to ignore completely the real and decisive question of what *are* the aims for which the war is being fought, i.e., what are the aims of British finance-capital, and to construct instead an imaginary fairy-tale world describing what in the opinion of these pundits " should " be the aims for which the war " ought " to be fought—and then in the name of these hypothetical aims to support the actual imperialist war which is being fought for perfectly normal imperialist aims and cannot be fought for any other so long as imperialism is imperialism.

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THIS little trick of legerdemain or make-believe underlying the whole liberal approach is described with ingenuous simplicity by Cole :

> All this is on the assumption that the Governments of Great Britain and France are fighting, and are prepared to stand, not for a decaying capitalist system, but for a real settlement of the affairs of Europe. I admit that this is a large assumption.

It is not merely a " large assumption," i.e., that Chamberlain and Daladier do not stand for capitalism. It is a piece of plain nonsense which would make all the rest of the pamphlet nonsense if it were to be treated as a serious programme for constructing a new social and political order, and not as what it really is, a programme of imperialist war aims for British and French imperialism. For solution of this initial difficulty Cole offers :

> It is for those of us who do entertain war aims more positive than these to compel Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier—or their successors in office—to fill up the void of their imaginations with ideas of superior potency.

Thus for this quondam exponent of " Marxism " the question is not a question of classes with opposing class aims ; the task of socialists in war-time is " to fill up the void of the imaginations " of the rulers of finance-capital with " ideas of superior potency." Could liberal bathos descend further ? And again :

> What is it that needs to be said ? First and foremost, that we are fighting Hitler, not as defenders of the old Europe, but as protagonists of the new.

Who is " we " ? The war is being conducted by Chamberlain, Churchill, Daladier, Bonnet. If they are not " defenders of the old Europe," who is ?

IF, however, these declarations only represented the familiar contortions of liberal idealist make-believe, discovering sophistical reasons for supporting an imperialist war, it would not be worth while wasting time upon them. What makes them important is precisely because they do represent a programme, a programme of imperialist aims (on the basis of the initial assumptions no other would be possible) ; and the more this programme is examined, the more it will be found that the programme is in essence identical between

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the Liberal Layton, the official Labour Attlee and the unofficial Labour Cole, and not only that, but is in essence identical with the real imperialist aims of the Government, as expressed by Halifax and by the *Times* Special Correspondent. Indeed, the Liberal-Labour apologists express the programme with far more shameless, aggressive bellicose completeness than the more cautious Government spokesmen, at the same time as they seek to dress it with liberal idealist phrases.

WHAT are the war aims of British and French imperialism ? Let us first set them out bluntly and coarsely, as any Marxist or realist enemy of imperialism would state them on the basis of the known facts and the normal characteristics of imperialism. Details would remain to be filled in according to the development of the situation ; but the general outline would run something like this. First, British-French domination of Europe, as at Versailles, with reduction of German imperialism to second rank ; possibly dismemberment of Germany ; and establishment of a system of vassal States. Second, establishment of a régime in Germany subordinate to British-French finance, substitution of a Western orientation for the present relations with the Soviet Union, and prevention of a socialist revolution which would lead to unity of the German people and the people of the Soviet Union and settle the question of the socialist revolution in Europe. Third, maintanance of the British-French colonial empires. Fourth, building up of the Western and Central European *bloc* against the Soviet Union. And now let us turn to the *Times*, Layton, Cole and Attlee.

THE *Times* proposes an " increasingly close combination " of Western and Central Europe, " including the civilised elements in Germany," under the control of an " international organ of government," for which the nucleus should be " the Supreme Council and Inter-Allied High Command " which " could be kept functioning after the war." Layton proposes a " European Association of Nations " to cover Western and Central Europe, to be formed by the action and initiative of Britain and France, and to be established under

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an " international authority " with a centralised air force. Cole proposes " a Federation of Western and Central Europe " which " must include the colonial territories of the Great Powers " and should have " a common patent law and a common commercial code which will render any registered patent or enterprise free over the entire territory of the Union " (i.e., a common basis of capitalism). Attlee proposes a " new international authority " which possibly " should in the first place be confined to Europe," with control of an " international air force." The war aims of British and French monopoly capital to dominate Western and Central Europe are here sufficiently clear.

SECOND, Germany. The *Times* demands a régime which shall be representative of " the civilised elements in Germany " : " it should not be impossible for the civilised elements in Germany to establish an ascendancy." What the *Times* means by " civilised elements " is not mysterious. Layton demands " a Germany that is trusted " (i.e., by British-French high finance), the test being readiness to enter into the European Association of Nations under the conditions laid down. Attlee demands that " there should be in Germany a Government which can be trusted." Cole demands a Germany " led by much the same elements as controlled the Weimar Republic," i.e., the elements which rebuilt capitalism in Germany, subordinated their policy to the requirements of British-French capital and prepared the way for fascism.

THIRD, the colonies. The concentrated monopolist *bloc* dreamt of by British and French finance-capital requires a corresponding co-ordinated control of the colonial empires. The *Times* proposes the organisation of " international " economic and technical services for the colonies. Layton proposes that the " administration of colonies " should be made " responsible to an international authority," and that Germany, if docile, should be allowed " to take her appropriate part in the administration and development of the colonial areas of the world." Cole proposes that " we throw our conquests together into a common pool " to be " put under the administration of an international body." Attlee

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describes the same proposals in bolder terms as the "abandonment of imperialism" ("we are against imperialism, whether it is practised by our own country or by any other" —there is no limit to the shamelessness of these faithful servants of imperialism) by which he hastens to explain that he means "an extended and strengthened mandate system under international authority," that is, a strengthened colonial system, with the pious addendum that "the interests of the natives must be paramount" (the old cant of British imperialism) and that "there must be equal access for all nations to markets and raw materials" (as Sir Samuel Hoare long ago explained to be the basic principle of British imperialism).

FOURTH, the Soviet Union. Here the contrast is interesting. The open capitalist representatives are reticent. It is the Labour representatives who take the warpath. The *Times* is silent. Layton discusses "the Russian enigma" and is content to let further policy develop "in due course." But Attlee goes out of his way to denounce the U.S.S.R. as having "made friends with the aggressor and shared the spoils" (his only reference to the Socialist State), and then proceeds to declare: "Germany is not the only aggressive State. Other States, some recently, some in remoter times, have been guilty of aggression." Cole's entire "War Aims" are based on the problem how to defend "the civilisation of Western Europe" against the Soviet Union: "I want the civilisation of Western Europe to survive"; his fear is that "Stalin will be left to dictate what terms he pleases to the ruined civilisations of Western and Central Europe." His pamphlet, far more openly than with any of the others, is a plan how to save Western imperialism from a European communist revolution. But in fact the common ground of all these policies is the desperate attempt to stabilise Western imperialism, under British-French leadership, against the socialist revolution.

THE aim to stabilise Western imperialism is in fact an illusory aim. Those who put it forward have failed to learn every lesson of the past twenty years. They would tread again the path of the war of 1914-18, of Versailles and of

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Weimar, leading again to world economic crisis, to fascism and renewed world war. But the conditions are no longer the same for such a repetition. The people of Germany, when they have freed themselves from the present domination, will not throw away their struggle to place themselves again under such a yoke as after the last war. The peoples of Central Europe will not again submit to counter-revolution under the ægis of Britain and France. For them the alternative path opens up of socialist freedom in unity with the Soviet Union, no longer the desperately struggling Socialist Republic of the first years, battered and bleeding from years of war and civil war and the dissolution of Tsarism, and assailed by a hundred enemies, but the powerful and prosperous State of victorious socialism, able to hold out its hand in comradeship to the peoples advancing to socialism. It is British and French capitalism that now go downwards in ever greater decay and inner dissolution. When the German workers move, the French workers will move with them ; that is the nightmare which underlies the ferocity of the Daladier régime. When that time comes, the British people will be faced with the final choice—either to go down in deepening economic ruin and catastrophe with the crumbling Empire, or to join hands with the socialist nations of Europe, and to become, no longer the centre of a slave Empire, but a free socialist nation of Europe, a part of the union of socialist nations from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific.

THE aim to reconstruct and stabilise Western imperialism is a reactionary aim. The projects of " Federal Union," now put forward to confuse the innocent with the blessings of the Halifaxes and the Hoares of Tory imperialism, are the projects of counter-revolution in Europe under the leadership of British-French high finance. The first necessity for the British and French working-class socialist movements, in order to carry forward their struggle against imperialism, is to free themselves from this type of propaganda which seeks to tie them to the aims of the British and French imperialists and their war. The choice before the British working class and all working people in Britain is in its essence a simple

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choice. Shall they go forward hand in hand with their rulers, with their class enemies, with the Chamberlains and Churchills and Hoares, with the promoters of fascism, in order to establish the dictatorship of the British and French financiers in Europe, strangle the workers' revolution in Europe and advance to war on the Soviet Union? Or shall they go hand in hand with the workers of Europe against imperialism, for their common liberation, for the victory of the working class and of socialism? For the working class there can be only one war aim in this war—the aim of their own victory against the Chamberlains, Hitlers, Daladiers and Mannerheims, against the system which has landed the peoples of Europe in this catastrophe and can offer no way of release, for the speediest ending of this war and the speediest victory of the working class and of socialism.

R. P. D.

We have heard that in some districts readers' groups have been formed to discuss the articles appearing in the *Labour Monthly*. We should be very glad to have further information on these groups. Will the readers responsible for their formation please write to us about them.

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Wages, Prices and Unemployment

BY JOHN KNIGHT

DURING THE FIRST two months of the present war labour conditions as affected by changes in wages, prices and employment have deteriorated more than during the first two years of the last world war.

August-September, 1914 : Wages remained more or less stable on the average ; wage changes in individual industries were small and unimportant. Prices of foodstuffs declined during the first month of the war ; during the second month of the war food prices rose only very slightly. Unemployment increased during the first month of the war, but already by the second month the dislocations caused by the outbreak of the war no longer affected the employment situation. Unemployment declined and continued to do so in the following months.

September-October, 1939 : Wages increased very slightly ; the majority of the workers did not receive any wage increases. Prices of foodstuffs rose rapidly from August to September as well as from September to October. Unemployment rose from August to September and the dislocation of business brought about by war, which in 1914 ceased to affect employment by the second month, continued to drive the unemployment figures up during the second month of the present world war.

While the standard of purchasing power of the workers remained about the same in the first two war months of 1914 *as during the preceding month of peace—the standard of purchasing power declined rapidly during the first two months of war of* 1939 *as compared with the preceding month of peace.*

* * *

Unemployment amounted to 3.6 per cent. in July, 1914 ; by August it had risen to 6.2 per cent. ; but by September it had declined again to 5.4 per cent., and it continued to decline until in December, 1914, it had reached the low level of 3.3 per cent. In the middle of August, 1939, unemployment was 8.6 per cent. In spite of the fact that the following month contained only eight war days, unemployment rose on the 11th of September to 9.0 per cent. During the following month which was a complete month of war unemployment continued to increase and reached 9.4 per cent.

Wages remained more or less stable during the first five months of the war of 1914-18. According to official statistics wage rates increased

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from July, 1914 to December, 1914 by only about 0.1 per cent. During the first two months of the present war wage rates have risen more than in 1914. The total weekly wages paid in September rose by about £120,000—but this is less than ½ per cent. of the total weekly amount of wages paid. In October total weekly wages paid continued to increase and rose by a further £280,000, or less than 1 per cent. During the first two months of the war the total amount of wages paid therefore increased by a little more than 1 per cent.

* * *

But wage data alone mean little. The worker does not live on wages but on the goods he can buy with them. If we compare the development of prices during the first two months of the last world war and during the first two months of the present war we find a very considerable difference. Prices of foodstuffs developed as follows:

PRICES OF FOODSTUFFS DURING THE FIRST WAR MONTH

Foodstuffs	*Price Change During August, 1914*	*Price Change During September, 1939*
Beef—		
British	−2%	+4%
Imported	+2%	+5%
Mutton—		
British	0	+4%
Imported	+1%	+5%
Bacon	−6%	+10%
Fish	+6%	+29%
Flour..	−8%	+3%
Bread	−2%	+2%
Tea	0	+1%
Sugar	−7%	+47%
Milk	+1%	+1%
Butter	−10%	+16%
Cheese	−2%	+4%
Margarine	−5%	+1%
Eggs	−7%	+19%
Potatoes	−22%	+1%
Total Food Prices	−5%	+9%

PRICES OF FOODSTUFFS DURING THE FIRST TWO WAR MONTHS

Foodstuffs	*Price Change During Aug./Sept., 1914*	*Price Change During Sept./Oct., 1939*
Beef—		
British	−1%	+5%
Imported	+4%	+9%
Mutton—		
British	+1%	+6%
Imported	+2%	+9%

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Foodstuffs	*Price Change During August, 1914*	*Price Change During September, 1939*
Bacon	−5%	+22%
Fish	+11%	+16%
Flour..	−8%	+3%
Bread	−2%	+3%
Tea	0	+3%
Sugar	−1%	+48%
Milk	+2%	+3%
Butter	−10%	+18%
Cheese	−1%	+9%
Margarine	−7%	−7%
Eggs	0	+33%
Potatoes	−25%	+3%
..		
Total Food Prices	−3%	+12%

The result of this comparison between the development of food prices at the beginning of the last world war and at the beginning of the present war is very surprising indeed : *while in August, 1914, food prices declined by about 5 per cent. in September, 1939, they increased by 9 per cent. After two months of war, food prices were in 1914 3 per cent. lower than in the last month of peace—in 1939 they were not only not lower but by 12 per cent. higher than in the last month of peace.*

* * *

What were things like in 1914 ? Did the Government control the distribution of food ? Was there any attempt at rationing ? Was food production trustified ? Was the production of certain manufactured foods in the hands of monopolists ? No ! Nothing of this could be observed 25 years ago. But to-day all this is changed. Food production and food distribution are to a large part controlled by the Government. Food trusts and food monopolies are realities.

Now we know the difference between 25 years ago and to-day. Now we know why food prices have increased rapidly to-day while 25 years ago they declined. Now we know to whom we owe the rapid rise in the price of the necessities of life. Now we know where to attack in order to fight the increase in food prices.

* * *

Food costs are the most important item in the family budget. Other important items are clothing and rent. While the latter showed few changes in 1914 as well as in 1939, the former rose considerably in 1939. Unfortunately no general cost of living data are available for the first five months of the war of 1914-18. The cost of food declined during the first two months, as we have seen, by about 3 per cent. ; rent, we can assume remained unchanged ; as to the other items they, all combined, do not play such a rôle that they could have influenced the development appreciably. If one assumes a minimum decline in

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the total cost of living, during the first two months in the war of 1914, of 2 per cent. one is probably right. During the first two months of the present war cost of living according to the official index increased by 9 per cent. If we compute on the basis of these data a real wage index we arrive at the following conclusion :

CHANGES IN WAGES, COST OF LIVING AND REAL WAGES DURING THE FIRST TWO WAR MONTHS

Year	*Wages*	*Cost of Living*	*Real Wages Employed Workers*	*Unemployment*	*Real Wages All Workers*
1914	+0%	−2%	+2%	+2%	−0%
1939	+1%	+9%	−7%	+1%	−8%

During the first two months of the war of 1914-18 *real wages remained about stable if we include losses suffered by the workers through the increase in unemployment. During the first two months of the present war real wages, including losses through unemployment, declined by* 8 *per cent.*

Those who receive pensions, those who are on the dole, those who get fixed allowances are even more hit than the employed workers. For they have suffered a decline in real income exactly corresponding to the increase in cost of living. Neither unemployment benefits, nor compensation for accidents, nor old age pensions, nor widows' and orphans' pensions have been increased by a single penny. Their income has remained stable, they have not even had the small increase which a number of workers have received in recent weeks. They are the hardest hit. For they are the weakest group in society—and therefore, under capitalism, they have to suffer most.

In all our computations we have assumed that the official cost of living index gives an accurate picture of the development of the expenditure of a worker's family. This, however, is not the case. It was not the case before the war, and this was even officially recognised by the consent of the government to a re-construction of the cost of living index. But in war-time the official index is even less adequate since many new items of expenditure in connection with evacuation measures, the black-out, conscription, and so on have been added to the family budget. Unfortunately—but not accidentally—no figures are available to measure the real increase in the cost of living of the masses, and the data we have given concerning the decline of the purchasing power of the workers are, therefore, to be regarded as minimum figures, decidedly understating the case.

* * *

Real wages, the purchasing power of the masses of the people, and their general standard of living will undoubtedly continue to decline if the trade unions persist in their passive attitude towards the economic interests of the workers, if they concentrate their zeal on imperialist victory on the continent instead of a victory of the workers at home, if they play consciously or unconsciously into the hands of the trusts and monopolies as they have done up to now.

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It is a tragedy to see a trade union leader like Mr. Bevin propose the "original" plan of keeping wages and prices stable. He ought to know that under this plan Hitler began to lower the standard of living of the German people even below the 1932 crisis level. It is a tragedy to see the miners asking for a wage increase which does not cover by half the increase in prices, instead of asking considerably more than the increase in prices; because, firstly, labour conditions should not remain stable but should improve, and secondly because responsible trade union leaders ought to know that prices under war conditions tend to increase continuously, and that if they ask only as much as prices actually have increased, they will have to ask for a new wage increase on the day after the settlement of their claims because prices have increased again. It is a tragedy to see the railway unions asking for a 50 shilling minimum if prices have increased so much that on the day of the award these 50 shillings mean in terms of purchasing power for the majority of the workers concerned less than they received before anyway.

For the sake of the people, for the sake of the men and women and children they claim to represent, the trade unions must take an aggressive attitude and force the government and the trusts and monopolies to stop their campaign of rapidly increasing exploitation and plundering.

* * *

The decline in real wages cannot be regarded solely as another attack on the working people in order to increase profits. It must be regarded as the expression of certain changes in the structure of British capitalism. We have mentioned already the difference in the structure and control of the food industry in 1914 and 1939. Then there were no or only very few trusts, then there existed little government control. To-day, the greater part of the food manufacturing industry is trustified and (or) government controlled, while farming is to a large extent controlled by semi-official marketing boards. The trusts and monopolies, however, are not only in charge of farming and the food industry, either directly or through the Government, they allocate to themselves more and more of the direction of the whole of the national economy.

It would be wrong to say that Fascism is reigning to-day in Britain. But the British economic system is showing more and more signs characteristic of Fascism. *The tendency towards a dictatorship of the trusts and monopolies is becoming more and more visible and finds more and more expression, especially in the policy towards the working people.*

The *Economist*, November 11, 1939, contains in the leading article, "The Progress of the War," the following statement:

> The official attitude on food rationing seems to show no conception of the fact that we cannot exert our maximum effort without deliberately reducing the consumption of food, whether the food is physically available or not. We are in grave danger of doing only as much to win

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the war as can be done without inconvenience or dislocation. The totalitarian war cannot be won in our spare time.

It is a super-Goering who wrote this article. Goering said that Germany had to import either guns or food, and the German people had to choose guns instead of butter. The *Economist*, however, surpasses Goering by saying: even if we have enough foodstuffs we must not consume them but rather ask for guns. Food consumption and the living standard of the working classes have to be lowered under all circumstances. And the reason for this is: " Great Britain is engaged in a totalitarian war."*

In point of fact, there is no totalitarian war on at all. On the contrary, the present war is up to now anything but totalitarian. But the ruling classes of this country want to start a totalitarian rule, and a totalitarian rule, it is true, implies a totalitarian decline of the standard of living of the people. The answer to this is a " totalitarian " fight of the working people against the attempts of the ruling classes to crush them completely.

*The inevitable Mr. J. M. Keynes joins hands with the *Economist* by explaining "Any further increase towards our maximum war effort must be at the expense of pre-war standards of consumption." (*The Times*, November 14). As a means of decreasing the standard of consumption he proposes forced loans to be paid by the workers to the government—a proposal which he recommends by explaining that it is " nearly as good as a 10 per cent. fall in real wages." (*The Times*, November 15).

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The Bombay Strike

BY S. S. BATLIWALA

[*The following account of the Bombay Strike of October 2 is reprinted from "The National Front" of October 8, 1939.*]

FROM THE DAY the second imperialist world war began, we were all very concerned. Not to say that the machinations of Chamberlain and his gang had enmeshed us in their glib talk about "defence of democracy." What worried the Communists, leaders and rank and file, was how to effectively harness the opportunity and create confidence in the Indian National Congress that the working class would not fall behind in the fight against imperialism and for independence.

It was increasingly evident that the top leadership in the Congress was hesitant and wavering. It was adopting dilatory tactics, and going in for negotiations with the Viceroy.

The country was seething with discontent. The Defence of India Ordinance was demoralising quite a lot of political workers in the Congress fold through its ruthless provisions. "It is no more a question of going to jail as in the Civil Disobedience days ; this time you face the gallows ! Let us not be rash, let us move with circumspection" —this was the advice freely given by responsible "leaders."

The Communists were faced with the task of breaking the spell of the Ordinance, and creating confidence in the masses. We, in Bombay, determined to give the lead, and naturally our first task was to organise a one-day political strike with the dominant section of the local working class, the textile workers, shouldering the burden.

We were faced with tremendous obstacles.

The local nationalist newspapers were crowing the inperialist tune under the direct gaze of the Press Censor. They refused to give us even a few odd lines in a remote corner of their journals for the purpose of giving the call. Legal leaflets and handbills could not be issued, as the owners of printing presses refused to risk "confiscation" by publishing our manifesto or appeal. Even the *Kranti*, our Marathi weekly, and the *National Front* had been forced to close down because no press was prepared to print "Communist" newspapers.

The police made bando-bast to prevent processions by enforcing the requisite of a "pass" to be previously obtained from the local police station.

Our most popular comrades on the textile front, the office bearers of

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the Girni Kamgar Union, were bound down by "bail-conditions." They were prohibited from addressing meetings, or otherwise taking part, directly or indirectly, in the furtherance of any strike. Thus, Comrades Dange, Mirajkar, Mrs. Dange, Patkar, Bhise and Bhogle were not available to us.

The Congress Socialist Party was not ready to co-operate.

The Trade Unions would have to be left out of count in order not to deprive the workers of their legal organisations in these days of economic hardship entailed by the War.

Besides all this, the issue would be a straight political one, not permitting the use of economic grievances for rallying support. A clear anti-war call would be given, the Ordinance would be defied in action and not in mere words, and we were to be ready for the full consequences of the action.

A meeting of all Communists unanimously decided for the strike to be called on October 2. The die was cast.

Our campaign immediately started with barely three weeks in hand. With hurricane speed meetings of contacts were convened, areas divided up, and details chalked out. From the first day, the street-corner meetings were organised. All our speakers, good, bad and indifferent, were posted in different localities. Under the Red Flag gathered toiling men and women to listen to the clear analysis of the war, the repudiation of any and every compromise, the exposure of "neutrality," the reasons why the working class was forced to take the lead and point the way to the rest of the nation, a call to immediate action.

From all corners came the demand for handbills and leaflets. With great difficulty the Manifesto was printed anyhow and circulated. The Congress Ministry had distributed 1,300,000 handbills, and the Bombay Provincial Trades Union Congress had printed 120,000 before the general strike on November 7. Only ten thousand copies of the Manifesto could be printed for the strike on October 2. Further handbills were not possible to get.

Every day, after the mills closed, the working-class area hummed with activity. Cyclists with red flags went shouting by. In the night men with burning torches appeared at strategic corners and harangued the crowd. A new cadre, which had not touched the textile workers before, took street-corner and chawl meetings and gave convincing proof of the ramifications of Communists in the city. They argued and carried conviction, patiently explaining the difficulties that loomed large before the workers. In the morning as the workers went to their mills and factories, they were greeted by hand-written posters in their chawls, on the walls of buildings, on the stairs they mounted, at the gates they entered, even on the road on which they walked. Group meetings of "contacts," the gatherings of promising workers selected for their mettle in previous local strike struggles, were organised by

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the hundred. Everywhere the effort was to clearly understand the political implications of the strike. These contacts emerging from these "study circles" widened the net of organisation, and proved to be the pivot of the strike. They brought home the lesson that effective Trade Union work is indispensable for a party professing Marxism, because that alone can supply the necessary links with the working masses and permit you to test and choose the right men. The patient work of our comrades for the last so many years in the Girni Kamgar Union was yielding its result.

Four days previous to the strike the first blow was received. Com. Sawant was arrested with a bundle of anti-war posters and taken to the lock-up. The comrades resolved, "We shall be more careful. We cannot afford to lose comrades like this." The campaign was further intensified on the last days but no arrest of a similar kind could be effected by the police.

The rally of workers at Delisle Road mustered only ten thousand men and a sprinkling of women workers.

"This means that the strike to-morrow will be a flop" said an interested press reporter in the hearing of our comrades.

"I beg your pardon," came the prompt reply, "what you do not see is the character of the gathering. We are working on a different basis this time. We are not relying on agitation and mass enthusiasm so much as on effective organisation. Here in this meeting there are representatives from every centre and area. The picked men, the contacts, are here. And we are confident about success to-morrow."

But the press representative went away unconvinced. He had witnessed the rally that preceded the November 7 general strike. It had reached the colossal figure of nearly a lac. This rally could not impress him.

Com. Joglekar presided at the rally. In his characteristic style, he brought the grimness of the occasion to bear on the workers. Com. Parulekar, Joint Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress and a member of the Servants of India Society, spoke next. In burning words, he tore the veil that covers the propaganda by the Government. "Why should you offer your lives at the altar of this British Empire? This is a war between two dacoits. Let them fight between themselves. Why should we, the toilers, their victims, help them?" Comrade Ranadive made the best speech of the day. In quiet argumentative style, he posed one problem after another and demolished the bogey held up before the workers against the strike on October 2.

"We are told we shall lose a week's wages by going on a day's strike. But who can deny that if we do not strike on this political issue, if we do not give the call for action so that national independence may be achieved, we shall lose not a week's wages but the wages of a whole life-time, the wages of freedom from slavery, the wages of happiness

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from misery, the wages of relief from stark exploitation that is our misfortune to-day, and harder chains to-morrow? . . . . We are not stealing the initiative from anybody. Through the strike, we assure the Congress, the Indian nation, that the working class will be solidly behind every struggle for attaining freedom, whatever the cost, however big the sacrifice demanded. . . . . We give our assurance by deeds and not only by words. . . . . To-day the British lion has fallen into a pit which he dug himself. He had meant it for Soviet Russia, the land where Workers and Peasants rule. It is not our good fortune to claim that we have pushed him into the pit. But it is certainly our good fortune that he is in it. We are not going to help him to come out. The lion is telling us: "Pull me out by my tail, dear lamb, and we shall be eternal friends." But we know full well that the lion will eat us up if he is once extricated. So all we are ready to do is to push him deeper down, to cover the pit, along with him, with dust and sand, and give this vicious exploiting Empire a decent burial . . . ."

There was loud and long applause. "Victory to the Red Flag," "Down with Imperialist War," "Long Live Indian Independence," burst forth from every corner.

The meeting transformed itself into a procession, headed by the women with torchlights. Till late in the night, these men and women marched through streets and by-lanes carrying the message for the next day.

All night there was feverish activity. The finishing touches to the arrangements were completed by 2 a.m. And by 4 a.m. the pickets with Red Flags had already reached every mill-gate. Over and above these there were pickets posted at strategic corners and chawl-gates. Then with baited breath we waited. I turned to Comrade Bukhari and asked: "What is your estimate of success?" A mysterious jumble of lines gathered on his forehead and with the left eye half-closed, he haltingly said: "Success—I am certain about. But numbers—I fear it may not reach even 50 per cent. of November 7. You see, the odds are too great."

I asked Comrade Vaidya the same question. He said: "The Bombay working class has never failed us. But I agree the odds are very great. No press, no handbills, no effective opposition to give momentum, no effective aid from others. They are trying to kill us by isolation, by putting us in cold storage . . . . Yes, yes, I believe we can draw easily about thirty thousand or so—because the issue is a straight political general strike, and the terror of the Defence of India Act is so widespread in the city."

I asked a young worker lad: "What are the workers feeling? Will there be a strike?" He was visibly annoyed. "Have you doubts about it? Come to my chawl and speak to the workers themselves. The worker is quite confident about the strike. We have done it before,

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we shall do it again." And then the momentous day arrived. All our sober calculations were smashed up by the militant working class. The Bombay textile proletariat rose to the occasion and gave a bigger and a better demonstration than November 7.

We had only one motor-lorry to give the call on the day of the strike. The loud-speaker was not available. Nor were Comrades Dange or Mirajkar available.

Police arrangements were thorough. In front of every mill-gate, at every street-corner, the police with their lathis strutted about under the direct supervision of a sergeant or a sub-inspector. In three or four places, armed policemen with rifles were present in batches of twelve and more. Four loaded police vans continuously patrolled the labour areas, going round and round, stopping before each mill-gate, exchanging greetings and going ahead.

But where were the workers ?

The slogan given was : " You need not stir out of your houses. Do not throng near mill-gates, or the police may take the excuse for a lathi-charge or more." And the order was being obeyed. The streets remained empty, especially in front of mill-gates.

Picketing was hardly needed.

At the Morarjee Mills I got mixed up with some Bhaya workers. One of them was saying : " Bhaiya, this time we must not be disgraced like last time. We are not going in at all—nowhere near the gates. They blamed us as strike-breakers. Don't you remember the rebuke of Swamiji when he came here the other day ? " And the others—to a man—concurred.

In Madanpura, the Muslim workers seemed equally determined. " This is our strike, too. The Britisher is no friend of Islam. And we know the Red Flag stands equally for everybody."

I asked : " What is the position in your area ? "

The prompt reply came : " More than fifty per cent. of Muslim workers have obeyed the Red Flag consciously." At Worli, a dozen women workers were arguing strenuously. I overheard : " Who is going to stop me ? Come, I shall lead you in."

" No, no, you are foolish—what will you gain by going in ? "

" Are you going to lose wages for these good-for-nothings ? "

" Don't say that—I am not coming. I am a follower of these Red Flaggers. Have you never heard Usha-tai speaking at a meeting ? "

In the end all went home. They said the children at home were better company than the inhuman machines.

We almost ran into two volunteers with Red Flags being pursued by a dozen lathi-wielding policemen under the valiant lead of an Anglo-Indian Sergeant at Foras Road.

The volunteers complained that they had been assaulted, the flag torn, and now they were being bodily hustled away from the area.

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We asked the sergeant why he was behaving in this fashion. "I don't want anybody lurking about here. They tried to hold a meeting in the garden next door to the Mill. Supposing they throw stones from there. I shall not permit it."

We had to sternly tell him that he was over-stepping the bounds of his duties, that he could not stop meetings like this in anticipation of stone-throwing.

"I do not care. I am the master here." And he started strutting about the place, brandishing his "stick."

A crowd had collected. We decided to report him to higher authorities. We got our volunteers to resume their meeting as well as picket-posts with the flags. As we were moving away to the police station, the sergeant walked up. "Look here, mister, I did not mean any harm. The flag was accidentally torn. Honest truth. Let us treat the whole incident as closed."

And when we told him that his explanation was unsatisfactory, he said: "But I am an Indian, I was born in India, I wish to live in India. We are all brothers."

This was something new from an Anglo-Indian sergeant.

But the police tried to keep a neutral attitude in most cases. They did not take sides as on November 7.

At Worli the manager and higher staff of a mill came out and started using undue pressure on their men to get in, actually hustling some of them inside. The volunteer at the gate gave an extempore speech. In order to silence him a stone was pelted at him from inside the mill gate. It caught him in the back. The result was at once visible. Even the dozen or so who had weakened and were about to be dragged in walked away disgusted with the mill authorities. The manager made a piteous appeal, saying he was a "labour-wallah," but to no avail. In half an hour, the fifty who had previously gone in also came out and joined the strike. The mill completely closed down for the day by 9 a.m.

At Kohinoor Mills men were brought into the mills from 3 a.m. Nearly one thousand five hundred—nearly half the complement—were in by 8 a.m. But by 11.30 a.m. the whole mill came out *en masse* and joined the strike.

Nearly 40 mills remained completely closed from the beginning, not a single worker crossing the gate. Another 15 tried to work with depleted complements, but most of them had to give up the ghost by 12 noon.

In the north of Bombay, where the labour areas are situated, all the colleges and the most important schools also closed down. Nearly ten thousand students came on the streets. Three meetings of students took place, and fiery speeches against War and declaring solidarity with the workers were made. It is interesting to note in this connection

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that these students attended the evening Kamgar Maidan meeting, and the workers greeted them with " Vidyarthi-Kamgaranchi Jai."

At Girgaon, a group of hotel workers went from restaurant to restaurant with two demands : (1) one hotel-worker to join the group in propaganda ; (2) the restaurant to shut down in sympathy with the strike.

The Dharavi leather workers had joined the strike. So also a majority of the Ambarnath match factory workers. The seamen held a demonstration and meeting in sympathy. Sections of building workers laid down their tools.

Comrade Taher was first arrested for " obstruction to traffic " and released. Once again he was arrested for " stone-throwing " and bailed out for Rs. 10.

Two volunteers were also arrested for " obstruction," and bailed out for varying amounts.

But the whole day passed without a single affray or " incident." The workers behaved with great restraint and earned the unstinted unanimous compliment even from the hostile local press that the strike was absolutely peaceful and no force was used at any stage.

By 9 a.m. the strike was practically complete. It totalled 89,000 workers when we approached the desk of Comrades Deshpande and Bhandarkar at the *Kranti* office for reports from the various centres. The comrades had worked with iron discipline. The organisation functioned through the new contacts and had worked wonderfully. The Phœnix Mills workers, men and women, on strike for the last six months, had done yeomen service. After the success of November 7 interested parties had maintained that the success of the general strike was due to the unholy alliance made by the Communists with Ambedkar. Ambedkar and his party have now declared for co-operation with Britain. And yet the call of the Communists had found a bigger response from workers than November 7, and in a sober and quieter mood. The strike had made a record in numbers and in the peaceful way in which it was accomplished.

As we went along to the historic Kamgar Maidan, Comrade Ranadive remarked : " For the next strike, we need only one public rally, one meetings of contacts and one handbill, and the task would be accomplished." Nobody contradicted him, so well was everybody impressed by the cool, silent and yet effective strength displayed by the workers. There was no fuss, no excitement, but with quiet, determined, grim faces they had forged a huge political weapon for themselves and evolved the technique of its use.

We reached the Kamgar Maidan and a sea of heads greeted us. The maidan was decked in huge Red Flags. Comrade Shahid, with his stentorian voice and wide, sweeping gestures, was casting a spell on the audience.

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Comrade Guran retailed in song, in a beautifully-worded Marathi *povada*, the history of the Russian worker before, during and after the Revolution. Every phrase was eagerly taken in, and as he stretched the pitch of the last words, thundering applause greeted him. Comrade Tambitkar sang, and the huge multitude, transformed into a militant mood, sang with him, rocking to the tune.

Comrade Joglekar once again presided at the meeting and gave a stirring call to action. " We, the workers of Bombay, have proved to-day that we shall never be found wanting in the struggle for independence . . . . English statesmen shall no more fix who is our friend. . . . . This Hitler whom they called a friend yesterday is now the worst criminal on earth . . . . We have nothing to do with their quarrels. We stand for a free India and are determined to achieve our independence."

Comrade Ranadive moved the main resolution of the day. In a speech which went directly to the heart of the workers he explained how the war had come about, who was involved in it and why. He said : " If Gandhiji stands pledged to non-violence, it is not understandable why he wants India to support Britain which has resorted to violence. . . . . We have had a peaceful exhibition of our strength to-day, and we pledge that till the last worker is alive, we shall fight for the cause so dear to the Indian nation." He gave the history of the workers' struggle in Bombay and India, and asked, " With what face can imperialists and foreign capitalists ask us to-day to help them ? Have they forgotten their own misdeeds ? And what is the guarantee that the shootings on workers, the Jallian-wallas, will not be repeated in the future ? We are not likely to give milk to the serpent who has bitten us before and whose teeth have not been drawn by us . . . . If the Russian worker could effect a revolution during the last World War, the Indian worker can also rise to the same heights now."

He ended up amidst cheers when he declared : " They say the war will last for three years. We have sworn to-day to resist imperialism and within the three years, we are sure of bringing it down to dust."

The resolution was read out :—

" This meeting declares its solidarity with the international working class and the peoples of the world, who are being dragged into the most destructive war by the Imperialist Powers. The meeting regards the present war as a challenge to the international solidarity of the working-class, and declares that it is the common task of the workers and people of different countries to defeat this imperialist conspiracy against humanity, so that peace and goodwill is restored among the nations of the world.

" This meeting condemns the Nazi aggression against Poland, and expresses its deep sympathy with the Polish people, who have been the victims of barbarous atrocities.

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" This meeting is further of opinion that the war between Nazi Germany and British Imperialism is born out of Imperialist rivalry, and that British Imperialism is neither defending democracy nor the Independence of nations.

" This meeting, therefore, is of opinion that loyalty to Indian freedom demands resistance to war on the part of the Indian people.

" This meeting strongly protests against the attempts of the Government to exploit Indian resources and man-power and impose the war on India in spite of India's declared opposition to it.

" This meeting strongly condemns the Viceregal Ordinances which virtually place the country under martial law régime and demands their immediate repeal.

" This meeting is of opinion that the full resources of the country should be utilised at this critical stage for forcing the pace of Indian democracy. This meeting, therefore, requests the coming meeting of the All-India Congress Committee to give a bold lead to the country, by throwing overboard all compromise proposals and starting a nation-wide war-resistance movement.

" This meeting pledges itself to war resistance and declares that any other path at this critical juncture would be a crime against Indian freedom and independence."

Comrade Bukhari in his simple and forceful Urdu, seconded the resolution. He explained the task of the working class in the present epoch, dilated on the foreign policy of Soviet Russia, and appealed to the Congress to launch a country-wide struggle from which we must emerge victorious.

Comrade Parulekar was greeted by the workers as he advanced to the microphone. He said : " To-day your success has created a stir in the Assembly Chambers. Prime Minister Kher acknowledged to me that the strike has been a phenomenal success. I greet you on your strength and unity."

Comrade Indulal Yagnik, Joint Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha, then rose to give fraternal greetings on behalf of the A.I.K.S. and the Forward *Bloc*.

" I am returning from my tour of Gujerat and I bring you the admiration and affection of the peasants. You know how to do things in a big way. We, the poor peasants, live in small isolated villages, but we too are copying your example. We have also started resistance against war."

The resolution was adopted amidst loud slogans of " Down with Imperialist War," " Long Live Indian Freedom."

The meeting adopted a resolution supporting the demand of workers for wage adjustment to prices.

" This meeting is firmly of opinion that the rise in prices, permitted under Government authority, is extortionate and excessive. It has

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entailed severe hardship on poor and middle sections of the population.

" This meeting therefore demands immediate legislation guaranteeing increase in wages with the rise in prices. This meeting further calls upon the workers of Bombay to organise a conference to create sanctions behind the above demand."

The meeting then adopted a resolution demanding from the Congress Government a fair settlement to the Phœnix Mills Strike. Comrade Laljee Pendse explained in detail the need of building up the Girni Kamgar Union into a mass union and how a sound trade union can be the basis of a sound political party. Comrade Tambitkar made an impassioned appeal for the redress of the grievances of the Phœnix Mills workers, retailed their miseries and showed how firmly they had borne the brunt of a long strike to save the Bombay working class from retrenchment and unemployment.

The Marathi version of the International was cheered to an echo and the meeting dispersed.

We were all tired out after a strenuous day. But the *Kranti* office carried on discussions for another two hours, evaluating the gains, measuring the next advance, wondering what the morrow would bring us.

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The Political Black-out

BY R. PAGE ARNOT

THE AUTHORITIES WHO have put the black-out upon us at present have at the same time blacked-out the future for themselves. They have entered on a course whose outcome cannot be foretold. With all their skill and cunning, born of accumulated experience, the old ruling class of Britain are yet unable to foresee what the future holds in store. With all the more anxiety they must pay heed to the mood of the masses, while at the same time by the conditions of their rule and the special conditions of their war they must seek to prevent that mood finding expression.

For the opponents of the Government in turn the central problem of the war is precisely this attitude of the masses and above all the way in which it is prevented from finding expression. On the one side, amongst the mass of the people a deep dissatisfaction, ranging from entire lack of enthusiasm to vocal opposition : on the other side, no reflection of this attitude in the pronouncements of the political parties or in the utterances of the figure-heads of political and mass organisations. The black-out is complete. This (and not the topics shoved onto the public's platter by the purveyors of Fleet Street) is the real peculiarity of the situation ; and it has to be examined with care so that the necessary steps may be taken to pass beyond this stage. To reach this understanding it will be useful in the first place to note not only the obvious parallels with the last war but also some of the dissimilarities.

The parallel of the two imperialist wars is well known : each time the leaders of the British Labour Party were found on the side of their capitalist Government, each time urging on the working class to the slaughter.

Alike in 1914 and in 1939 the ruling class adroitly adopted slogans that would attract the masses while concealing their real war aim ; and on each occasion parties and personages of the political " left " were found ready and eager to amplify the Government's slogans by putting forward alluring war aims of their own ; but the dissimilarities which come into view are still more striking. Not only is the whole situation altered, with socialism triumphant over one-sixth of the globe and the imperialist powers plunged deep in the morass of the General Crisis of Capitalism that was introduced by the 1914-18 war ; but also there are remarkable specific differences in class relations, in political parties and as regards the peoples affected.

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1914 *and* 1939 *Contrasted*

In 1914 party politics of the old style had been in full swing right up to the outbreak of war. The change was abrupt. It had the effect of a sudden betrayal of socialism. This time the betrayal has been prepared in advance. During the whole eight years of the National Government (itself the first attempt at a peace-time coalition of parties) there had been a steady preparation for a formal coalition. From the moment when the old leaders of the Labour Party in 1931 agreed to a Means Test (which has become one of the standing infamies of this country) the process of co-operation with the Government developed. Nowhere was it more clear than in questions of foreign policy and the armaments race. On the latter the Labour Party executed a right-about turn from the standpoint of the Hastings Conference (general strike against war) until it could be relied upon to vote the swollen war budgets of the last four years. In foreign and imperial affairs the co-operation with the Government, sometimes explicit, sometimes seen in refraining from necessary opposition, reached a very advanced stage some three years ago. Once the Labour leaders had shown the hollowness of their democratic catchwords by their betrayal of the Spanish people, once they had committed themselves to support of the criminal " non-intervention " method of strangling the Spanish Republic, their complicity in the smashing of Czechoslovakia at Munich was automatic and easy. Eight years of increasing co-operation with the National Government, leading the average elector to remark on how little was the difference in policy between Government and Opposition, together with the proffered co-operation of the Trade Union Congress General Council, has made an almost " painless " transition to this present coalition. The normal political manners of Mr. Lloyd George in his controversies with the Government (the content of which, of course, represents only a long-sighted variety of ruling class views) appear tumultuous and abnormal by contrast with the gentlemanly suavity of the Labour Party leaders.

The result is that the stage of party coalition reached in this imperialist war goes far beyond the simple " union sacrée " of twenty five years ago. Then it was a simple denial of class struggle and an open case of class collaboration that was covered by the words " party truce." But now the situation is entirely different : and there is no sense in talking of a " party truce " if the parties on the most vital questions have years ago ceased to carry on a fight. Something else lies beneath. The same phrases, " Party truce," " electoral truce," " industrial truce," now cover a different reality, and one extremely menacing to the working class. This time in Britain we have reached the stage not only of totalitarian warfare with a totalitarian war machine but of what are the beginnings of a single totalitarian party.

The official policy of each party is dovetailed one into the other : and the political life of Britain is being suffocated. For the division of labour

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inside this approaching totalitarian grouping, by which Parliamentary Liberals and Labourites are told off to act as a formal " Opposition " and thereby keep up the democratic façade, should deceive no one. Indeed, it may be useful to the powers of finance-capital in this country to have in reserve an alternative " government which can be trusted," in order, " under new management," to carry on the same business, i.e., to put through the same imperialist aims, to wage an imperialist war. And, should the slaughter and oppression at home and overseas reach a point where the National Government were no longer able to carry on, what better alternative could they have than members of the last Labour Government, which kept over 50,000 political prisoners in gaol in India ? Just as Mr. J. H. Thomas was really more serviceable in the General Council than as one of Baldwin's Cabinet, so the Labour Lieutenants of the capitalist class lose some of their utility when they sit in the same cabinet as the open capitalist representatives. So the division of labour serves for present purposes and it may be for the future as well.

The " Opposition's " War Aims

About the dovetailing of policy there can be no doubt. Take the " peace aims " of Mr. Attlee, delivered not to a special party conference but to a " Reichstag " of M.P.s and candidates who, if they were forbidden questions and discussion by the platform, were all free to cheer if they so wished : take that speech of November 8 with its programme of extended war and notice how well it fits in with the meagre pronouncements of the National Government. Note, too, how the Prime Minister in his " war aims " and " peace aims " speech of November 26 " lets out the rope a little " in the same direction as Mr. Attlee.

Mr. Brailsford acclaimed it, praised it for its wise reticence (meaning for those passages in which it said nothing lest in the future it might be against whatever secret treaties or other form of scoundrelism the Government is engaged upon) and generally slobbered over those very politicians to whom he has already begun to endear himself by his weekly output of venom against the only socialist state.

The *Times*, keeping up an air of delighted surprise, remarks of Mr. Attlee's " clear and decided " pronouncement that " it matches well, though it was the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, with the declaration of the Foreign Secretary the day before " : and proceeds, reassuringly for its readers, " In no essential particular is there any divergence of opinion."

In no essential particular is there any divergence of opinion. That remark might well serve as the epitaph of the present Transport House clique, who have carefully excluded even the word " socialism " from their Imperialist war programme. Of course, within this totalitarian unity of policy, there is also division of labour. While Mr.

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Chamberlain bitterly complains that Hitler cannot be trusted because he dropped his aggressive aims against the Soviet Union, Mr. Attlee complains bitterly of the Soviet Union that " it shared the spoils " with Hitler. It appears that, while Chamberlain and Churchill publicly must treat the U.S.S.R. as a neutral, the Labour leaders are licensed to treat it not only as a potential enemy, but as the next " International Public Enemy Number 1," if it refuses to " make restitution " of Western Ukraine and Byelo-Russia to the Sikorsky group of landlords.

In one other " essential particular " the Attlee war aims put forward boldly what the Foreign Office has hitherto left vague. This is the future domination of Europe by the victorious Anglo-French combination—though of course no such revealing language is used. The words used are of " an international authority " and the slogan is given out —" Europe must federate or perish." But in practice, as the analysis by Lenin of the " United States of Europe " slogan in 1915 showed, the coming together on a capitalist basis of the European powers could only mean joint robbery of the colonial peoples : and, indeed, another item of the war aims, under the summary heading of " no imperialism " (!) calmly envisages this. Since the Russian Revolution, it has meant something more : as a capitalist grouping, it would be hostile to the Soviet Socialist Republics.

However, in order to get the full meaning of the " beautiful " slogan, " Europe must federate or perish," we have to go outside the official pronouncements and turn to the " Left " writers who have been as busy as bees, manufacturing " war aims " and " peace aims " like honey. Instinctively the " Left " have become part of the propaganda of British totalitarians whose methods in this respect differ from that of Dr. Goebbels in that there is a self-conducted orchestra. But they keep in tune. The wood wind of a Brailsford may execute cadenzas but his efforts never result in a disharmony, but are gracefully modulated into the dominant key. The speciality of the " Left " instruments is variegated " war aims " by which to cast a veil over the present realities.

The only outstanding exception to this has been Mr. Bernard Shaw, whose sane and wise utterances produced a riot of screaming imbecility from amongst the habitual writers of the *New Statesman*.*

Federal Union

Under this heading the vast work of deceiving the masses is now

*Mr. Bernard Shaw presents a curious contrast to other left-wing writers, who have progressively deteriorated. In 1900 Mr. Shaw was one of the few socialists who supported the British Government's attitude in the South African war. The others were pro-Boer.

By 1914, while the others were becoming Jingoes almost indistinguishable from the writers of the old *Morning Post*, Mr. Shaw evolved the argument of war on two fronts, which while more efficacious in including socialist workers to support the British Government, was sufficiently barbed to bring on him the wildest abuse from the hacks of the ruling class.

Now that they have practically all become hacks of the ruling class and whippers-in for war, Mr. Shaw advances a stage further and, solitary amongst the intellectuals, puts out his slogan of " Cease fire ; turn up the lights."

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on foot and is being undertaken by many who do it all the more effectively because they are themselves deceived. They deceived themselves in the last " war to end war " and their subsequent awakening and denunciation of the capitalists to whom they had rendered good service as " betraying their ideals " came too late. Now once more they are fashioning a variety of schemes by which war, itself a product of capitalism, can be banished while leaving capitalism intact.

Under the " Federal Union " umbrella there are to be found those who hardly conceal the sordid reality of intended Anglo-French Imperialist domination, including some of the authors of the " Dyarchy " for India in the last war ; those for whom the attraction is mainly a breaking down of customs tariffs and extension of British trade ; those who see in it at last the ideal form in which the fifteen year old " spirit of Locarno " (against the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.) can be embodied ; and finally those of Liberal capitalist outlook (often labelling themselves " socialist ") who have the greatest influence on those sections who are not yet aroused and the least upon the rulers whom they serve. These last, the Liberal-Socialists of Oxford and the *New Statesman* type of periodical, are the most important at this stage of the war.

What is the content of their fair-seeming proposals ? The answer is legion. You do not know where to have them : each has his own specific, and awkward questions are thus turned aside. But if we take the most widely-spread brochure, " The Case for Federal Union " by W. B. Curry, after all the pages of eloquent denunciation of war, the actual proposals put forward as a basis of discussion boil down to an Anglo-French-American combination with or without the smaller Northern states of Europe thrown in as a make-weight. The Soviet Union is to be excluded, together with Asia, Africa and South America. What is this, in content, but the main victor powers of the Versailles war-combination, with possibly the small Northern neutrals most dependent upon them. Yet this is given the name of an *international* authority, whose rule will ensure peace to mankind ! This is the shoddy fabric that is advertised as the shining garment of perpetual peace.

Why, it is shoddier even than Kautsky's " ultra-imperialism " theory, put forward in the last imperialist war : and the words Lenin wrote of Kautsky can equally be applied to the Liberal-Socialists of to-day :—

> All oppressing classes need two social functions to safeguard their rule : the function of the hangman and the function of the priest. The hangman is required to quell the protests and indignation of the oppressed ; the priest is required to paint for them the prospects of mitigation of their sufferings and sacrifices (this is particularly easy to do without giving any guarantee that these prospects will be " achieved "), while preserving class rule, and thereby to reconcile them to class rule, wean them from revolutionary action, undermine their revolutionary spirit and destroy their revolutionary determination.

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Breaking Through

Thus the deep dissatisfaction amongst the masses is prevented from finding expression, because it is stifled by the beginnings of a totalitarian party, Liberal-Labour-Tory, linked to the totalitarian war machine. And only the illusion of an expression of popular desires and hopes is created by the various " left " writers who instead of arousing the mass of the people against the war are soothing them with poppy syrup.

This stifling of the struggle cannot endure for long—for the simple reason that there is only one solution for the class struggle, namely, the downfall of capitalist domination and the creation of a classless socialist society that puts an end to war. But it is not easy at first, with all the vents stopped up, for the voice of the workers to be heard. Here and there the sifting process of war will bring forward in this or that political party, in this or that grouping someone who breaks the totalitarian bonds and enters on the path to become a tribune of the people.

How It Can Be Done

But it is above all in the workshops and factories, in the trade union branches and in the organisations of working women that the struggle must break through.

Actually in the localities resolutions show that the workers recognise the imperialist nature of the war and the need for struggle against it. In the six weeks from mid-October there were no less than 144 resolutions from working-class organisations (excluding those from Communist Party branches) mentioned in the *Daily Worker :* and not every branch of a trade union or Labour Party sends its resolutions to the Press. These resolutions in one form or another were all in opposition to the official policy of the Labour Party leaders. In the same newspaper from October 11 till November 25 there were reported 37 strikes amongst metal workers, transport workers, miners, builders, electricians and other trades. These strikes took place after the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had fixed up an industrial truce.

But this struggle has to be part and parcel of the daily struggle in the workshops. There it is that the exploitation of man by man is to be seen, there the attack on wages, hours, conditions of labour is centred, there the character of this war of monopoly-capital is most readily understood. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that the organised working class strengthening themselves in the workshop struggle, and linked with the struggle in the localities, should break through the bond of " national unity " and " party truce " and find the means to express their needs and for carrying on the fight against capitalism and war.

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Strategic Aspects of the War—III

BY "STRATEGIST"

THREE MONTHS OF the second imperialist war have passed. The rapid collapse of the semi-fascist Polish State under the swift blows of the German armoured divisions, and the subsequent actions of the Red Army safeguarding the interests of the Ukrainian and White-Russian peoples and the security of the Soviet Union, have changed the economic, political and strategic situation in the East. War with all its horrors has been so far eliminated from those vast countries between the Baltic and the Black Sea. This achievement, in spite of all the intentions of the imperialist warmongers, is the fruit of the wise peace policy of the Soviet Union.

However, the war between Britain and France on the one hand, and Germany on the other, for colonies, raw materials, for the domination of sea routes and the exploitation of foreign peoples is going on. The actual strategic deadlock in the West, instead of bringing the war to an end according to the wishes of the peoples and especially of the working masses, has caused a revival of diplomatic action with the aim of spreading the war among the countries not at present involved.

In a previous article the strategic situation in the West was analysed and it was explained why large-scale land operations, including the possibility of an invasion of Holland, will not solve the problem of the strategic deadlock, at least in the immediate future. The first three months of land, air and naval warfare have shown quite clearly, that under the present conditions a military decision is out of the question. Both land armies are facing each other in formidable defence positions. Frontal attacks, even sacrificing hundreds of thousands of lives and a large part of the available war material, are unlikely to be successful. Movements of German armies through Holland and Belgium or Switzerland would undoubtedly improve Germany's strategic position but would not end the war in a military sense.

The different German air raids on the Firth of Forth, the fleet at Scapa Flow and on one convoy in the North Sea have proved that the fighter is the most dangerous weapon against bombers. Several raiders were driven off by the interceptor squadrons before they had reached their objectives. Others, which got through the anti-aircraft gun barrage and dropped their bombs, were shot down over the North Sea on their way home by the pursuit squadrons. Losses were

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between 25 per cent. and 40 per cent. of attacking air-craft. This percentage is much too high for risking larger concentrations of bombers. The fighter can only be fought by fighters. As the flying time of a fighter is very limited they cannot cross the North Sea together with the bombers. German bombers must at present fly alone to England without the powerful protection of the fighter. The British Air Force is similarly handicapped, which explains the equally heavy losses on the occasion of the attacks on the Kiel Canal and notably on Heligoland.

Under present conditions mass bombardments of England as well as of North and North Western Germany seem to be very unlikely, as neither side wants to risk the loss of many very expensive bombers. To a certain degree weather conditions also make the inhabited areas on both sides of the North Sea, at least for the next few months, relatively safe from the air. Theoretically mass bombardments of Eastern France and the Southern Rhineland and South Western Germany are possible, yet the actual inferiority of the German Messerschmidt fighter to the most modern British Hurricane or Spitfire and French Curtiss machines, proved in several air combats on the Western Front, may deter the German Air Command from somewhat risky adventures, which will only cause reciprocal and perhaps more effective counter-bombardments. There are plenty of grounds for believing that there will be no decisive air action in the immediate future.

Naval warfare has been limited to the maintenance of blockade measures. During the first weeks of the war the losses of British and French merchant ships were relatively high as the Admiralty had neglected the preparation of convoys ; but at present the convoy system for British and French merchantmen works more or less satisfactorily. On account of Germany's ruthless submarine war against unprotected neutral ships, at the moment they have no small share of losses. Nevertheless, the tonnage sunk during the first months of the war amounts to less than a tenth of the losses during the most critical times of the unrestricted German submarine war in the Spring of 1917. Apparently the number of sunken or seriously damaged German submarines is considerable and is estimated by the British Admiralty at almost one-third of the total. On the other hand, however, the First Lord of the Admiralty had to declare that Germany is speeding up her submarine production and is turning out each week two new submarines. This would bring the number of available craft to about 100 from January, 1940. As there will soon be in the German navy a shortage of trained ratings and officers for submarines and the defence forces of the British Navy are being increased too, the submarine war will hardly be a war-decisive weapon whatever its degree of menace. The few German raiders in the North and South Atlantic—if they are indeed the famous pocket-battleships—are not at all a serious menace to shipping.

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Neither the submarine war nor the British blockade of German ports, and the different contraband controls for neutral shipping, will lead to a breakdown of the economic life of the belligerent countries. Certainly Germany's position is much more difficult than that of England or France as she has long since exhausted her economic means. But there is no question that, through having employed for years a rigid war-economics policy and through her early rationing, she possesses considerable stores of raw materials and food.

Yet more important than the German pre-war preparations for an emergency economy are the possibilities still existing for German imports of raw materials from neutral countries. Agricultural products from Denmark, fish from Norway and iron ores from Sweden are arriving in Germany through the Baltic completely undisturbed by the British navy. Germany's doors to the Balkans, to the Near East and to Italy are wide open. There is no doubt that these commercial routes, even at much higher prices, are being intensively used. It is no secret that Italy's and Portugal's imports have increased considerably—the latter to 50 per cent. since the outbreak of the war. These raw materials are going from Italy direct and from Portugal by Valencia and Genoa to Germany. Italy has become Germany's broker, bartering German coal in order to pay the overseas clients. Similar arrangements have been made with the Balkan countries which are supplying against coal and machinery petrol and agricultural products. The ruthless exploitation of Poland, of the Czech Protectorate and of the Slovakian Republic allows the transfer of labour to Germany, while the small actual demand for shells and other war materials permits the production of industrial products for this barter commerce. Naturally this system cannot continue for an unlimited time, but for the next year a collapse of German economics cannot be expected.

Certainly Germany's food situation is quite serious, but grain will be imported into Germany. The Soviet Union has declared that a blockade aiming at the starvation of the civil population is against international conventions and acts accordingly. Her exports to Germany are limited on account of the immensely increased needs of the Soviet population but there is no doubt that grain and other food will be imported into Germany by the Soviet Union, which does not want to be guilty of the starvation of the German working masses, led against their will into this war.

Germany's actual position is not so bad as Mr. Chamberlain and the British Press declare. On the other hand Germany has no chance at all of defeating the British and French Empires. Both belligerent sides are therefore interested in spreading the war in order to gain favourable strategic and economic positions which might become the turning point for a decisive blow against the economic and imperialist competitor.

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British diplomacy has been very active during the past month and has undoubtedly been more successful than has Herr von Ribbentrop. British agents are busy in Scandinavia, in Finland, in Turkey and the Balkans. They are working in Holland and Belgium and hope to attach all these states to the British-French imperialist bloc. They have disturbed the attempts of the Soviet Union to establish peace in the Baltic and the Balkans. They wish to involve the Soviet Union in the war.

The successful negotiations of the Soviet Union with Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, whose economic systems largely depended on the City of London, have alarmed the British bankers. Downing Street began immediately to intrigue, when it was recognised that British influence in the Baltic was vanishing. The conference of the three Scandinavian kings with the Finnish President and Finland's appeal to President Roosevelt were sponsored in the City (which did not want to lose the last asset of the East Baltic trade), and were supported by those politicians who are still dreaming of an anti-Soviet crusade. The capitalist bulwark near Leningrad, menacing the entrance of the Gulf of Finland, must be maintained at all costs in the "neutral" hands of the Scandinavian bloc which is a mere instrument of Britain's foreign policy. This is the real reason why the Finnish Government has been invited through British and American official circles and by the warmongering leaders of the Second International to maintain a negative attitude towards the Soviet proposals, designed solely for the security and the peaceful relations of both Finland and the Soviet Union. Meantime, while the Soviet-Finnish talks have been for the time suspended it is worth noting that one of the Finnish delegates, Finance Minister Tanner, declared that the talks were throughout conducted in a "pleasant and confidential" way without the employment of any threats.

Pressure similar to that exercised on Finland has been employed on Turkey by the imperialist warmongers. A diplomatic race to involve Turkey in one of the belligerent systems began. That seldom successful German arch-intriguer, Ambassador von Papen, was finally beaten by the British and French diplomats and their military assistants. This cynical game with the peace-loving Turkish people—firm friends of the Soviet Union—was started when the Soviet-Turkish negotiations for security within the Black Sea and its entries from the Mediterranean were almost concluded. The Soviet Union had suggested to the Turkish Government the conclusion of a bilateral pact of mutual assistance limited to regions of the Black Sea and the Straits, providing in view of the war danger for the closing of the Bosphorus to warships of non-Black Sea powers. But the Government of Turkey preferred to tie up its destinies with the belligerent Anglo-French imperialist bloc and rejected the proposals of the Soviet Union. A loan of 90 million pounds to the Turkish Government speeded up the negotiations

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between London and Ankara which ended with the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance between Turkey, England and France. Immediately after the signature of the treaty the French General Weygand, a notorious Fascist, and his British colleague in the Near East arrived at Ankara in order to confer with the Turkish General Staff. Turkey has now, as Molotov stated before the Supreme Soviet, " definitely discarded the cautious policy of neutrality and has entered the orbit of the developing European War." The danger of a new war front in the region of the Black Sea appears on the horizon of Imperialist policy.

The lifting of the American arms embargo, which was not raised in favour of the Republican Government of Spain, spreads the menace of war over the Atlantic. Orders for 45 million pounds have been placed by the British Government with the American steel and gun kings. Further orders amounting to 200 million pounds will follow, to link Wall Street with the imperialist interests of the City. Wall Street has now a keen interest in keeping the war alive and spreading. It is well to remember that the U.S.A. did not enter the first imperialist war in order to safeguard " democracy " but to save the plutocratic interests of big business which would have sufferred tremendous losses in the event of a defeat of the Allies of 1914-18. The same policy is developing to-day and it might end with the entrance of the United States into the war.

The case of the menaced " neutrality " of Holland and Belgium is another example of the way in which the imperialist warmongers in London, Paris and Berlin play with the peace and the security of small countries. The strategic position of these two countries is a continuous temptation to both belligerent sides. The British and the German air force would find on Dutch and Belgian territory excellent air bases for their fighter and bomber squadrons, which could reach the German Western Industrial district as well as London and the industries of the Midlands. Holland and Belgium could furnish Germany with many excellent submarine bases and on the other hand shut in favour of England one of the gaps of the blockade.

It is a fact that Germany has concentrated a considerable number of her shock troops near the Dutch and Belgian borders in order to exercise political and economic pressure upon both countries. Part of these concentrations are within range of the French fighters which could have accompanied the allied bombers. So far no bombardments have been carried out, but the public opinion of Holland and Belgium has been brought to an extreme degree of excitement by rumours of the officially inspired British and French press, which is eager to spread the war in the interests of British imperialists. Under these conditions the Dutch and Belgian Governments have taken several important defence measures, which they were apparently advised to do by the British Government. They launched, however, at the same

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time a mutual peace appeal to both belligerent sides in order to keep their favourable commercial position. This appeal was rejected by both Germany, England and France but the neutrality of Belgium and Holland was guaranteed again by the belligerents under certain reservations. For the moment peace will continue at the mouths of the Rhine but there is no doubt that the imperialists will try again to involve these two small countries in the war.

By the refusal of the Turkish Government to sign the proposed Soviet-Turkish mutual assistance pact the Balkans became one of the principal objectives for the diplomacy of the imperialist blocs in Europe. Hitler has just started, with military concentrations in Slovakia, to blackmail Hungary, the door to Rumania's riches of grain and fuel. British diplomats in Bukarest, Athens, Sofia and Belgrade are busily trying to persuade the Governments of these states to link their destinies with the Western imperialist powers. Mussolini, too, has entered the diplomatic arena of the Balkans and after reaching an agreement with Greece is trying to organise an anti-Soviet Balkan bloc. Fascist Italy has become, during the past few weeks, the champion of the Anti-Comintern Pact, which broke to pieces when the Soviet Union signed the friendship and frontier treaty with Germany. Marshal Balbo and Signor Gayda are delivering strong attacks upon the Soviet Union and the Communist International and are speaking about the danger of " Communist influence " in the Balkans. The Pope is joining them and putting on the old record of " menaced Christianity."

But this is not only the line of Italian Fascism. The governments of England and France, who are waging according to their official statements a " war for democracy," are willing to support every movement directed against the Soviet Union. They are encouraging Mussolini's battle cries against the land of the Soviets and Communism. The French press publishes reports about growing Communist agitation in Bulgaria while papers like *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* give approving publicity to the idea of an anti-Soviet Balkan bloc under the ægis of Italy.

The war is spreading and it is spreading along the line of an attempt to involve the Soviet Union and to " switch " the " war against Hitlerism " into a war against Socialism. These intentions of the powerful interests of the " 200 families " in France, of the City and of Wall Street are reflected by the course of the military operations. Neither Germany nor England and France are risking their air-fleets against objectives which are within easy reach of bombers and fighters. The German High Command is allowed to move its armoured divisions along the Western Front and across Germany without being bothered at all. The armies are being saved up for another purpose.

British conservative circles are busy starting a propaganda campaign for the restoration of the German monarchy. They hope to get rid of Hitler and of his outstanding satellites in some form or other and to

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establish a monarchist and conservative German Government which has the support of the Germany Army and which is willing to wage the holy crusade of capitalism against the Soviet Union. They have not taken into account, however, the German people and the strength and unity of the peoples of the Soviet Union. The Hitler régime, whether in peace or war, can only be overthrown by the German people. It is the German opposition which will one day replace the Nazis, and it must do this through its own forces. This task cannot be performed from outside. The German anti-fascist workers who just before the outbreak of the war compelled the Nazis to grant them important wage concessions on the West Wall, at the dockyards and in the mines must be considered as the vanguard of the anti-Nazi opposition within Germany. Their successful efforts against the Nazi system and Hitler's war foreshadow the rise of a resistance comparable to the munition strikes in January, 1918, and the uprising in November, 1918, which brought the Great War to an end. These mighty forces, against which now the whole war terror of the Nazi Government is directed, will never tolerate the revival of the Hohenzollern dynasty or an anti-Bolshevik Rauschning or Otto Strasser Government in the pay of London. They will never march against the Soviet Union.

In these conditions, when the imperialist warmongers are trying to spread the war and attempting to involve the Soviet Union, the country of Socialism pursues its own independent policy, dictated by the interests of the Soviet peoples and of the workers of the world. This policy, based on the economic and political strength of Socialism and on the powerful Red Army has so far secured peace in the East of Europe and has increased security for the Soviet peoples. The strategically most vulnerable points of the Soviet borderline in the Baltic and on the Ukrainian frontier have been strengthened. They are now solid bulwarks against any imperialist crusader. The diplomatic and financial manœuvres in Scandinavia, in the Balkans and at Ankara prove very clearly that the imperialist General Staffs are looking for bases from which they might direct a powerful pincer-movement against the land of Socialism.

The Soviet Union does not permit provocative actions against itself. The U.S.S.R. continues calmly and steadily its peace policy and is trying to eliminate war from its borders. But should the imperialist enemies of the land of Socialism attempt to approach Soviet territory they would find themselves destroyed—like the motorised Japanese army, which tried to invade the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic. Japan has drawn the lessons of this battle and is now beginning to normalise her relations with the Soviet Union. The policy of the Soviet Union has found—even under the most difficult conditions of repression and persecution, as in France—the full support of the vanguard of the working masses, who have recognised that this war is not a war for " democracy," as the imperialist governments and

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the leaders of the Second International declare, but a new attempt to redivide the world. They understand that this war is not in their interests and that, as Dimitrov has said, it must be ended, by destroying "once and for all the fundamental causes giving rise to imperialist wars."

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P. J. Wallace ..	0	2	6
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The Colonies and War*

FOR THE SECOND time within a quarter of a century, the ruling classes of Britain and France are attempting to drag the people of their colonial Empires into an imperialist war. The subject peoples have been declared belligerent without being consulted, and their troops have been drafted overseas to protect with their lives the interests of British and French Imperialists.

As in 1914, so to-day, the reactionary ruling class in Britain and France present this war as a war for democracy, a war for the independence of small nations, a war to build a new world order based on justice and honest dealing. Yet the record of their own dealing proves the falsity of these professions.

The Indians, the Arabs and other colonial people do not forget the broken pledges of imperialism, nor have they failed to notice the cynical betrayal, by these same imperialists, of democracy in every corner of the world. In the Colonies, more than anywhere else in the world, the people have watched with sympathetic anxiety the struggles of the Chinese, the Abyssinian and the Spanish people.

The people who sacrificed Spain and Czechoslovakia, these people are not fighting for democracy ; the blood of millions, which they are prepared to shed, will be shed in a senseless imperialist war, fought for a new partition of the world and for world domination.

But the people of India and the Colonies are not deceived by false slogans of war for democracy ; they see no reason why they should place their lives and their resources at the disposal of their foreign rulers, when in their own countries democracy and freedom are denied to them. Their attitude to this war is defined not by the fair words of their rulers, but by their own bitter experience of what democracy means within the Empire.

For within the British Empire there was little enough of democracy even before the war for democracy began.

In 1935 India was given a Constitution which was advertised as a big step towards democracy and Dominion Status. But it gave the vote to only 30 of India's 350 millions ; it secured the financial interests of the City of London from any possible interference by the people's representatives ; it carefully used the feudal Princes and other reactionary vested interests as Britain's stalking-horse against the Indian people ; and it reserved to the British officials the right to veto any legislation and to issue executive orders having the force of law.

*Statement adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

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In the Colonies millions of coloured people are denied the vote ; they are not consulted about the administration nor about the management of their lives. It is the white settlers and business men who advise the bureaucracy. Government is carried on by Ordinance ; there is no freedom of speech or of the press ; Trade Union and political organisation is either illegal or functions under the daily threat of a prosecution for " sedition." The peasantry are driven by heavy taxes from their land to work in British-owned mines and plantations ; and, as workers, they are paid a few shillings a month and are forced to live in foul conditions, so that the British capitalist may earn his profits.

This is what imperialism means for the people in the Empire. This is the state of affairs they are asked to fight to preserve.

From the last imperialist war they gained nothing ; hundreds of thousands of them lost their lives on foreign battlefields, fighting for " democracy," and enormous war debts were incurred. But the fruit garnered from their loyalty to the Empire was a crop of regulations such as the Press Act and the repressive Rowlatt Act. They were promised self-government, but they got a strengthening of their political bondage. They were promised reforms, but their hunger and their poverty increased, and they have been bled white in the years of the economic crisis of capitalism.

The Colonial people have nothing to gain from another imperialist war, save a further loss of freedom and heavier burdens. Already the French imperialists boast of new naval and air bases in Africa and the doubling of French Native troops, without costing a centime to the French tax-payer. Similarly, in India the Army is being increased and placed on a war footing at the expense of the people, and the Indian Princes have pledged the whole resources of their States in support of British imperialism. The process of bleeding the people has already begun.

At the same time, in order to suppress the voice of criticism and to hide the people's opposition to war, drastic emergency legislation has been passed, whittling down the limited right of the people. In India, for example, all meetings and discussions are prohibited ; the left-wing press is being closed down ; socialists have been arrested for anti-war propaganda. In particular these ordinances strike at the working class by penalising any activity that " promotes class hatred " or " causes alarm to the public." *The Act invokes the death penalty for disobedience to orders.* Martial law has already been enforced in the Assam oil-fields, where a strike has been going on for six months.

The imperialists, talking bravely of democracy, try to hide the magnitude of the crisis in India ; but they cannot hide it from the people, who see clearly that they have nothing in common with the imperialists in this war. They are not interested in the struggle of rival imperialisms ; they are interested in their *own* struggle for freedom,

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for social justice and for an improvement in their material conditions. They can gain nothing by war ; it is in their interest to bring the war to a speedy end.

Since the last war, the movement in the Colonies for national liberation has grown in strength ; in a series of sharp conflicts with imperialism it has drawn ever wider sections of the people, particularly the workers and peasants, into action, and thus acquired a popular basis and greater unity. The attempt now being made by imperialism to harness these people to its war machine sounds for them the signal to intensify their struggles and to strike for freedom. For they are entirely justified in demanding an end to their exploitation and the remedy of all social injustice for which imperialism is responsible.

Communists have always fought for the right of all peoples to complete self-determination and they have always recognised the great importance of the national movement in the colonies in relation to the struggle of the working class against capitalism ; in this fight their allies are the working class of all countries and the powerful Socialist State, the U.S.S.R.

The Indian people have now thrown down a challenge to British Imperialism. Through years of struggle they have developed their movement so that it embraces the widest sections of the people. The last few years have witnessed a tremendous growth in the independent organisations of the workers and peasants in strikes, hunger marches, no-rent campaigns and demonstrations, proving conclusively the power of the people to resist the assault of imperialism upon their living conditions. Alongside of them, the subjects of the Indian princes, puppets of British imperialism, are in open revolt against feudal tyranny and the conditions of serfdom under which they have to live.

The Indian National Congress, till recently functioning as the local government in eight of the Provinces, has increased its membership in three years from half-a-million to over 5 millions. It has served to bring together on a common platform of struggle against British rule all those who are fighting, in the face of bitter repression, for social justice and for freedom from the heavy hand of imperialist reaction. And, to-day, on the outbreak of the imperialist war, it challenges the hypocrisy of British imperialism in the name of the Indian people.

In unambiguous terms, the Congress condemns Fascism *as an intensification of the system of imperialism which has oppressed and humiliated the Indian people for* 180 *years*. The Indian people will fight for democracy . . . . but for them that fight is at home and for the right to frame their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly elected by universal adult suffrage. They will have nothing to do with an imperialist war, fought for imperialist ends and vested interests.

The British ruling class, through its Viceroy, has contemptuously brushed aside India's demands. With vague promises of Dominion Status in the future—promises made 22 years ago and since dis-

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honoured—the Viceroy seeks to satisfy the people with offers of committees, conferences and consultations.

But behind these meaningless offers can be seen the real intention of imperialism—to perpetuate the rule of British financial interests by playing off one community or class against another, to provoke an immediate clash with the nationalist movement, and then, with the support of reactionary and feudal elements in India, to rule with the naked sword. Only thus can the people be harnessed to the imperial war chariot.

The people of India are unanimous in rejecting the Viceroy's insulting offer. The pretence that the Moslem community is in support of British imperialism and the war is being exposed in all its hollowness. The Congress Ministries have resigned. The provincial governors have installed their officials to carry on by ordinance and semi-martial law. But the people of India, the workers and peasants, will not take this attack lying down ; already 90,000 Bombay workers, under Communist leadership, have staged a one-day strike in protest against the war and the Emergency regulations.

The stage is set for struggle. The congress has given the challenge ; the masses of people, without distinction of caste or creed, will resist being forced, by ordinances and martial law, into this war.

But imperialism will seek to disrupt the unity of the people. It will seek to reach a compromise with a small section at the expense of the masses of workers, peasants and radical intellectuals. The task of countering these tactics and of preserving popular unity rests with those who are in closest touch with the masses, those who have led the great struggles of the workers and peasants in recent years, those, in short, who have nothing to gain by a compromise with imperialism. The Communists and Socialists, who have this close association with the masses of people, have the urgent task of extending their influence in the Trade Unions, in the Peasant Committees and throughout the movement of struggle against imperialism so as to unite and strengthen it against disruption.

The Arabs were drawn into the last imperialist war under false pretences. Since 1918 they have learnt the worth of British promises. They have learnt, too, the kind of military terror with which British imperialism fights the nationalist movements of its colonial people. In Palestine, military terror has been supplemented by the device of playing off the Jews against the Arabs so as to divert Arab nationalism into communal conflict.

But the future of Palestine, if it is to be a future in which the people can determine their own fate, cannot be assured by paying heed to the pledges of imperialism. On the contrary, the future of Palestine can only be satisfactorily settled by Jews and Arabs themselves, without the interference of a power which is only interested in the preservation of its financial and strategic interests.

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The people of Palestine need unity in order to turn their attention to the urgent economic needs of the peasants and workers ; they will only get this unity through a Constituent Assembly of Jews and Arabs to frame their own free constitution.

Ireland, in spite of bitter struggles since the last war, still remains humiliated by British imperialism. Her northern counties, in opposition to all geographical or economic sense, are lopped off and remain the colonial preserve of British landlords and vested interests. What little measure of independence she has been able to win has enabled her to remain neutral in this war of British imperialism ; but so long as the twenty six counties are not united in a free Ireland, she remains an appendage of British imperialism, unable to determine her own fate.

In every part of the British Empire, the eyes of the people are sympathetically fixed upon these most important struggles of the subject people against imperialism. For everywhere the people demand their freedom and an end to social injustice. The independence they want is not an abstraction ; they want it because they want the right to improve their material conditions, and, as a first step towards the realisation of this end, they want to enjoy those democratic rights which will enable them to resist the semi-feudal conditions under which they are exploited in the interests of foreign capital.

In the West Indies, British capitalists have been harassed in recent years by extensive " labour troubles," that is to say, by the great strike movement of all sections of workers against low wages, intolerable living conditions and victimisation. These strikes have been conducted in the face of intense repression and police firing.

Alongside and arising out of these strike movements and out of the growing unrest of the peasantry, movements for national liberation are beginning to appear in all the West Indian colonies. These Parties, sympathetically looking towards the Congress in India, will inevitably develop the feeling of national unity in their own country and lift the immediate economic struggles on to the plane of political struggle against imperialism.

In Africa, British imperialism subjects the people to the most primitive and feudal forms of exploitation. Poor and illiterate, they are provided with no social services, and the door of education is virtually closed to them. Frequently, they are debarred from possessing landed property ; always and everywhere they are driven off the land by heavy taxation, so that they are forced to labour under a white master for a miserable wage in unspeakable conditions. And, lest they should revolt against this state of slavery, they are deprived of all rights of free-speech, and are forbidden to organise themselves in political parties or trade unions.

Nevertheless, there is an awakening of protests against a rule that is no longer tolerable ; outbursts, hitherto sporadic and unco-ordinated, are gradually gaining coherence and political consciousness under the

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leadership of those who seek to profit from the experience of the national movement in other oppressed colonial countries.

It is these people, living under these conditions, that the British and French ruling class wish to drag into another imperialist war. To compel them to undergo the misery of such a war, the full armoury of Emergency Acts and Sedition Ordinances is being brought out. But the people do not want war ; they want freedom and relief from these inhuman conditions. They want to lead their own life.

And in this struggle which they are waging, the greatest inspiration to the people of the colonies is the example of the former subject peoples of the Russian Empire. Within the U.S.S.R. these nationalities have not only gained complete independence from economic and political domination, but out of deep poverty and illiteracy, they have been lifted up to a level of cultural and material well-being never known to them before.

To-day, also, the colonial people are aware of the friendship of the Soviet Union for all oppressed and subject people ; they see, and appreciate the help given by the Soviet Union to the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism ; and they see the liberation and boundless opportunities brought to the people of the Western Ukraine and Byelo-Russia after centuries of exploitation by tyrrannous landlords. The enslaved workers in the Colonies caanot fail to grasp the significance of the bloodless revolution that has been carried through, with the help of the Red Army, in these countries.

The crisis in India and these growing struggles in the colonies are of immediate importance to the British working-class and to all democrats. It is impossible for them, in the period of war, to put into cold storage their belief in the right of all peoples to self-determination. It is the ruling classes of the imperialist countries that have plunged the people into war ; and it is against imperialism, at its weakest point, that the colonial people are struggling.

But the leaders of the Labour Party have given their support to the Chamberlain Government for the prosecution of this war of imperialism. Their brave words about a new world order and their proclaimed " war aims " are meant to disguise the fact that they accept imperialist domination as inevitable. In this war, therefore, they will not, and they cannot, support the struggle of the colonial peoples for independence.

These Labour leaders believe in " the right of all nations to have the right to live and to develop their own characteristic civilisation." But they are united with the imperialists in opposing the demands of the Indian people for independence. Like the Viceroy himself, they advocate for India, progress towards " self-government within the Empire " ; and, because they are anxious to draw the Indian people effectively into the imperialist war, they offer as a bait, more committees, more conferences, more consultations. Only in this way,

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they think, will it be possible " to get the maximum contribution that India can make to the defence of the Commonwealth."

And for the future of the Colonial Empire, Mr. Attlee proposes—what ? " That in the government of the colonies, the interests of the natives must be paramount " and " that there must be equal access for all nations to markets and raw material." To achieve these two ends he argues that " a strengthened mandate system under international control " is necessary.

This *pooling* of colonies—letting in Germany and the other imperialist powers on the ground floor, as it was described by Mr. Bevin at Southport—reveals the complete capitulation of the Labour Party to the imperialists. They talk about the paramountcy of native interests ; but it is precisely under cover of these very words that the imperialists have excused their rule of the colonies for the last fifty years. They talk about free access to raw materials ; but what else is this than a proposal for the re-division of the colonial world and the setting-up of a system of super-imperialism ? The Mandate system, hitherto indistinguishable from any other form of colonial exploitation, is dragged out ; it is to be strengthened and extended ; it is to be the machinery for a joint directorate of the imperialist powers for the super-exploitation of the colonial world.

In this critical situation, the people of Britain must be quite clear that they have nothing in common with the imperialists and their aims for the re-division of the world. They must give their fullest and their most practical support to the people of India and the Colonies in their struggle against imperialism. As the war develops, its hardships and its misery will be forced upon the colonial people with ever greater urgency ; British imperialism will use its military force to dragoon the people into making their maximum contribution to the war in lives and resources. The struggle will become more acute, and the people of Britain must take their stand either on the side of imperialism or with the colonial people, struggling for their freedom.

Between the British people and the people of the colonies there is a complete unity of interest for the overthrow of the imperialist ruling class. It is necessary to win the widest possible support for the struggle of these people by explaining clearly what imperialism means in terms of the misery of hundreds of millions of colonial slaves. It is necessary to carry this agitation throughout the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Movement, protesting against the denial of all rights to these people, demanding that they shall not be forced, at the point of the bayonet, to take part in this war against their will.

The British working class must repudiate the reply given by the Viceroy to the Indian people ; they must repudiate the Labour Party's reactionary alliance with the imperialist exploiters and its proposals for " pooling " colonies under a joint directorate of super-imperialists ; they must demand the withdrawal of Emergency power and martial

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law which are aimed primarily at crushing the working-class movement in the colonies.

Twenty five years have passed since the colonies were dragged by the ruling class into the last imperialist war. In the meantime they have learnt much. This time they are far more ready to resist and to intensify their struggle. In large parts of the Empire the signal has sounded for the people to strike for freedom. At this moment the colonial people must not stand alone ; for it is in the interests of the British people to have done with imperialism, to bring the war to a speedy close, and to open up the way for the liberation of all peoples.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Law in War Time. (Labour Research Department.) 6d. 64 pp.

The German Army. Herbert Rosinski. (Hogarth Press.) 12s. 6d. 267 pp.

The Real Rulers of Germany. Hans Behrend. (Lawrence and Wishart.) 3s. 6d. 231 pp.

Parliament. W. Ivor Jennings. (Cambridge University Press.) 25s. 548 pp.

When Freedom Shrieked. Rothay Reynolds. (Gollancz.) 10s. 6d. 320 pp.

Danish-German Relations in Schleswig. Eric Hayman. (Friends' Peace Committee.) 6d. 44 pp.

Planned Investment. C. P. Mayhew. (Fabian Society.) 1s. 48 pp.

Democracy for India. H. N. Brailsford. (Fabian Society.) 2d. 16 pp.

Democracy Up-to-date. Sir Stafford Cripps. (Allen and Unwin.) 2s. 108 pp.

India's Demand for Freedom. (University Labour Federation and Lawrence and Wishart.) 2d. 32 pp.

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DOCUMENT OF THE MONTH

The Communist Party and the Labour Party

STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, NOVEMBER 23, 1939.

THE WAR HAS brought to the forefront the sharpest questions for the whole future of the Labour movement.

The Labour Party and trade union leadership have lined up, as in 1914, in unity with capitalism and with the War Government of the capitalist class in support of the war.

THE POLITICAL TRUCE—A STAB IN THE BACK

A political truce has been proclaimed with the capitalist parties. No by-elections are to be contested. The suspension of municipal elections has been agreed.

An industrial truce has been proclaimed with the employers. A free field has been opened for the offensive of the employers and the Government against the workers.

The local Labour Parties have been officially instructed to suspend any political fight. At the same time this attempt to demobilise the Labour movement is meeting with resistance. A number of local Labour Parties, Trades Councils and trade union branches have passed resolutions in opposition to the war and to the official policy of collaboration with capitalism.

This situation creates new problems for the advance of the working-class struggle and for the task of the Communist Party in leading forward this advance.

It is the duty of the Communist Party, the vanguard of the working class, to build up the confidence of the workers in their own strength, to promote in every way the independence of the working class from ruling class politics, and to develop the active independent struggle of the workers and of all working-class organisations against capitalism and its war.

Unity of the workers is more necessary now than ever in face of the attacks of capitalism, the burdens of the war and the urgency of the struggle to end the war. Against the united front of capitalism, its War Government and the Labour Party leadership, the united front of the workers must be built up.

The Communist Party strives for the united active struggle of all workers and working-class organisations, alike in the economic, social and political field, against the continuance of the war, against the Government and big capital, and against the Labour Party and trade union leadership who have united with capitalism.

ELECTORAL POLICY

In order to open the road for the advance of the workers, it is essential to break the political truce and to establish the independence of the working-class movement. The Communist Party accordingly calls on the workers to prepare to contest every by-election that will take place in opposition to the candidates of the Government and the candidates who support the Government and the war.

The electoral policy of the Communist Party has in the preceding period been governed by the aim of promoting a united front of the Labour Party and the Communist Party in the face of the danger of war and of advancing Fascism. The Communist Party refrained from putting up independent Communist candidates wherever the possibility of a split vote would have allowed the candidate of the ruling class to be returned. It gave its wholehearted support to Labour candidates and anti-Fascist candidates, while maintaining the right, where there was no danger from a split vote, to oppose reactionary Labour Party candidates.

Now, when the Labour Party has been tied up with the Government war machine and the responsible leaders are maintaining the National Government in office, it is necessary to revise the electoral policy of the Communist Party in order to carry on effectively the struggle against the war, against the war Government and for the advance of Socialism.

The Communist Party, true to the cause of the workers, can in no case support a Labour candidate who is supporting the imperialist Government and its war.

The Communist Party takes up the fight in the electoral field against the coalition of the official leadership of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties who support the war.

The workers in the Labour Party, Communist Party, trade unions, co-operative and other working-class organisations, should come together and select candidates who are uncompromis-

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ing against the war and prepared to fight for an independent working-class programme at home and abroad. The Communist Party will fully support and work for such candidates, whether they be Communists, trade unionists or members of the Labour Party.

In areas where it is not possible for the working class to put up its own candidate, the Communists and other class-conscious workers should support any progressive candidate who is opposed to the war and will support the economic and social demands of the workers.

For United Mass Advance

The new conditions throw on the workers in the Labour Party and the trade unions the problem of finding their path of advance in spite of the reactionary policy of the leadership. The Communist Party fights shoulder to shoulder with them in every step of their advance.

The local working-class organisations in carrying forward the struggle have now to carry it forward in defiance of the political truce which the upper leadership seeks to impose on them. They should uncompromisingly go forward on this basis, in unity with the Communist Party, and in opposition to the official policy of collaboration with capitalism and support of the war.

All forms of co-operation of the local working-class organisations should be developed through common activities, common electoral campaigns, etc.

Trade unions and trade union branches which are affiliated to the Labour Party should lose no opportunity to carry forward the struggle within the Labour Party against the official policy of collaboration with capitalism and support of the war.

Trade unionists should continue to pay the political levy, while demanding that a proportion of the political fund should be placed at the disposal of the branches and district committees for allocation for the purpose of the political working-class struggle against the capitalist parties.

The question of the affiliation of the Communist Party to the Labour Party is fundamentally affectedby the changed conditions. Our letter sent in answer to the Labour Party Executive refusal to place the issue before the Labour Party Conference and organisations, made clear that the character of the demand is now changed.

The letter expressed the full opposition of the Communist Party to the official policy and leadership of the Labour Party. The demand for affiliation is thus in no sense a demand for a united front with the upper leadership of the Labour Party, but a lever of struggle against the official leadership and policy in order to promote the development of the united struggle of the workers in the factories and local organisations.

At a moment when the official leaders of the Labour Party have abandoned both the struggle for Socialism and for peace, the Communist Party, confident in the power and fighting spirit of the working class, calls upon it to break through all attempts to stifle the struggle, to defend its own interests as a class, and to organise every means to end this imperialist war and to bring about the downfall of capitalist class rule in Britain.

Forward in Fight for Socialism

The Communist Party, the political party of the working class, which is to-day leading the independent struggle of the working people against the war and against the war Government for the victory of the working class and Socialism, calls upon all militant Socialists, on all active trade unionists and individual members of the Labour Party who to-day are aghast at the treachery of their leadership, to carry forward the struggle in closest unity with the Communist Party; and urges all those who are in agreement with the aims and policy of the Communist Party, to join the united and disciplined ranks of the Communist Party.

In this historic hour, the strengthening of the Communist Party represents the best and most effective way in which all genuine Socialists and active working-class fighters can carry forward their service to the working-class cause so as to hasten the end of the imperialist war and achieve the triumphant victory of Socialism.

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BOOK REVIEW

Fighter for Freedom

David Guest, A Memoir. Edited by Carmel Haden Guest. (Lawrence and Wishart. 2s.)

MRS. GUEST HAS collected here a number of accounts of David Guest, who was killed in Spain in 1938, fighting in the British Battalion of the International Brigade. The accounts come from friends, co-workers in the cause of socialism and comrades-in-arms. Included are some of the articles Guest wrote, mainly on aspects of dialectical materialism. The proceeds from the sale of the Memoir are to be devoted to the Wounded and Dependants Aid Committee to help the British men disabled in Spain and the widows of those who were killed.

This book was not composed with the intention of singling out the merits of David Guest, as contrasted with those of hundreds of working lads who gave their lives in Spain. It is fitting that Harry Pollitt writes (p. 12) of those others "whose family circumstances made it impossible for any special memoirs to be published about them, but who were David's comrades in life, in arms and in death, and to whose immortal memory this volume is as great a tribute as it is to those from the public schools and universities." Guest, like John Cornford, was a brilliantly gifted boy, who was presented also with exceptional opportunities. Both came from families in touch with the best intellectual circles of bourgeois Britain. Both had the advantage of the best education, at school and out of school, which came to them without the anxiety and labour undergone by those who come from lower social strata. Both, from their earliest years, could and were encouraged to practise independent criticism of their environment from the standpoint of a small advanced cultural group. Both had that boldness of mind and force of will which is almost a birth-right of their class.

But the life and death of such as Guest has a particular significance arising from the very fact that he turned away from the traditional culture of the English intellectuals. In such men the present crisis of bourgeois civilisation is felt most keenly and mirrored most clearly. It is such men who show, in their lives and writings, the fragility of modern culture, who demonstrate the staleness of values and confusion of thought of their bourgeois contemporaries. That they turn towards a new life in the working-class movement is of particular significance.

Guest was a passionately sincere person and presented the same face to all the world. The same very marked personality emerges from all the accounts of the different contributors to this volume. In theoretical academic circles he was a profoundly disturbing influence, for he insisted on viewing ideas as part of our general activity and seeing their implications in the world of practice. In practical political work he raised near-by tasks onto a more general and significant plane, that of organisation and general theory. Wherever he was he drove forward to that unity of theory and practice which is to be found only in the communist movement and its philosophical expression, dialectical materialism. In both theory and practice he was completely unsparing of himself.

Guest should not be thought of as one whose character found an easy expression in political organisation. It is true that he early became a communist and never wavered in his loyalty to the Communist Party. But he

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had to wrestle not only with political and theoretical problems, but also with the problem of self-discipline. Bill Spence writes (p. 133): "when David first started organisational work (with the Youth movement in 1934) he was restless and impetuous. It was a constant source of surprise to me how soon he adapted himself to the practical needs of the movement." This self-training of Guest stands out even more strongly in the memory of those who knew him earlier.

When I first knew him, from the time of his arrival at Cambridge University, Guest showed a number of the characteristics of English intellectualism. His mind was brilliantly keen and applied itself with equal intensity to social and mathematical problems. But his communism (he joined the Communist group after an interval in Germany) was accompanied by a certain distinctiveness in behaviour and appearance. His appearance was rather wild and uncouth. He was like an electric shock, not quite human. This eccentricity was deeply engrained in him and fundamentally unconscious; it belonged to the rare intensity of his thought and feeling. In the same way he would fall into absent-mindedness, or would not bother to take his meals.

We others took his character as it was and were grateful for the gifts he had. As Page Arnot says (p. 124), Guest could have become a successful and influential writer. But, as Arnot again says, for Guest other matters were on the agenda—the unemployed, poverty, Spain, practical problems. And he felt that he could contribute something very special to practical politics in his sympathy and organising ability. I think he must consciously have disciplined himself after his visit to Moscow in 1934. The extravagance left his communism. He checked his rashness, studied others in order to influence them best, held his arguments and decisions back till they were most effective. His love of the workers developed into understanding and effective leadership. His appearance changed so that he no longer appeared uncouth or alien. It was among the young workers in Battersea that he learnt to master the technique of class struggle and self-mastery. He went to Spain in no spirit of adventurousness, but as the comrade of the workers who were there.

This book gives a record of his devotion. Few have David Guests' talents, but his essential achievement can inspire all. For those who knew him he remains as a beloved, vivid comrade, never complaisant to confusion or sloth. always giving all his energy and demanding the utmost co-operation.

R. PASCAL.

SHORTER NOTICE

One Hundred Years Ago : the Story of the Montgomeryshire Chartists by T. Islwyn Nicholas (Gwasg y Seren Goch (Red Star Press) 5 Elmtree Avenue, Aberystwyth. 6d.)

How MANY OF those who are familiar with John Frost and the march on Newport in November, 1839, are aware that this was not the only part of Wales where Chartism reached the climax of armed insurrection? Actually the armed movement of the Montgomeryshire men, and their taking of power in the town of Llanidloes, ante-dated Frost's rising by several months. From April 30 to May 4, 1839, the Chartists, complete with Committee of Public Safety, and embryonic arsenal and mint, controlled this little flannel-weaving centre, supported by the miners of the neighbouring lead mines. Islwyn Nicholas has delved well into local sources, producing a brochure that is a model of what local working-class history should be. His example ought to inspire others.

G. A. H.

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